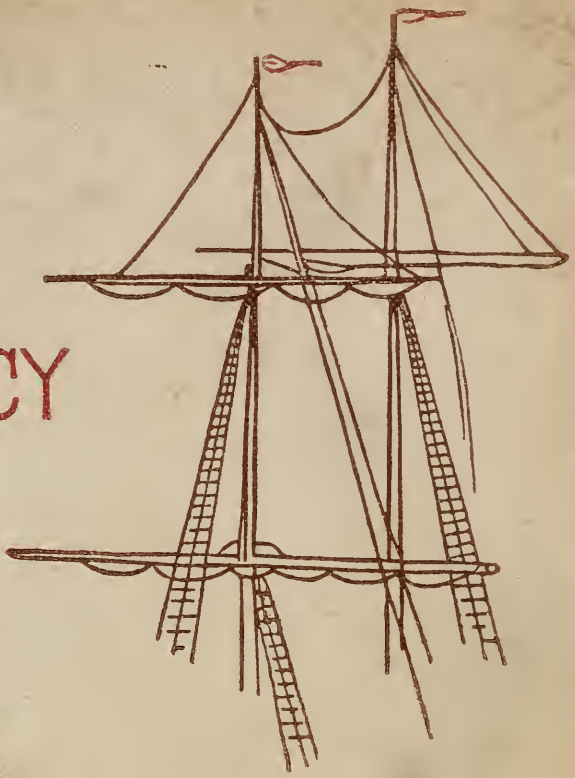
A GREAT EMERGENCY

BY



JULIANA HORATIA EWING

COSY CORNER SERIES

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BY

JULIANA HORATIA EWING

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A GREAT EMERGENCY.

CHAPTER I.

RUPERT'S LECTURES.— THE OLD YELLOW LEATHER BOOK.

We were very happy,— Rupert, Henrietta, Baby Cecil, and I. The only thing we found fault with in our lives was that there were so few events in them.

It was particularly provoking because we were so well prepared for events, — any events. Rupert prepared us. He had found a fat old book in the garret, bound in yellow leather, at the end of which were, "Directions how to act with presence of mind in any emergency;" and he gave lectures out of this in the kitchen garden.

Rupert was twelve years old. He was the eldest. Then came Henrietta, then I, and

last of all Baby Cecil, who was only four. The day I was nine years old, Rupert came into the nursery, holding up his handsome head with the dignified air which became him so well that I had more than once tried to put it on myself before the nursery looking-glass, and said to me, "You are quite old enough now, Charlie, to learn what to do whatever happens; so every half-holiday, when I am not playing cricket, I'll teach you presence of mind, near the cucumber-frame, if you're punctual. I've put up a bench."

I thanked him warmly, and the next day he put his head into the nursery at three o'clock in the afternoon, and said, "The lecture."

I jumped up, and so did Henrietta.

"It's not for girls," said Rupert; "women are not expected to do things when there's danger."

"*We* take care of *them*," said I, wondering if my mouth looked like Rupert's when I spoke, and whether my manner impressed Henrietta as much as his impressed me. She sat down again and only said, "I stayed in all Friday afternoon, and worked in bed on Saturday morning, to finish your net."

"Come along," said Rupert. "You know I'm very much obliged to you for the net; it's a splendid one."

"Ill bring a camp-stool if there's not room on the bench," said Henrietta cheerfully.

"People never take camp-stools to lectures," said Rupert, and when we got to the cucumber-frame, we found that the old plank, which he had raised on inverted flower-pots, would have held a much larger audience than he had invited. Opposite to it was a rhubarb-pot, with the round top of a barrel resting on it. On this stood a glass of water. A delightful idea thrilled through me, suggested by an imperfect remembrance of a lecture on chemistry which I had attended.

"Will there be experiments?" I whispered.

"I think not," Henrietta replied. "There are glasses of water at the missionary meetings, and there are no experiments."

Meanwhile, Rupert had been turning over the leaves of the yellow leather book. To say the truth, I think he was rather nervous; but if we have a virtue among us it is that of courage; and, after dropping the book twice, and drinking all the water at a draught, he found his place, and began.

"*How to act in an emergency.*"

"What's an emergency?" I asked. I was very proud of being taught by Rupert, and anxious to understand everything as we went along.

"You shouldn't interrupt," said Rupert, frowning. I am inclined now to think that he could not answer my question off-hand; for though he looked cross then, after referring to the book he answered me, "It's a fire, or drowning, or an apoplectic fit, or anything of that sort." After which explanation he hurried on. If what he said next came out of his own head, or whether he had learned it by heart, I never knew.

"There is no stronger sign of good-breeding than presence of mind in an — "

"Apoplectic fit," I suggested. I was giving the keenest attention, and Rupert had hesitated, the wind having blown over a leaf too many of the yellow leather book.

"An *emergency!*" he shouted, when he had found his place. "Now we'll have one each time. The one for to-day is, how to act in a case of drowning."

To speak the strict truth, I would rather not

have thought about drowning. I had my own private horror over a neighboring mill-dam, and I had once been very much frightened by a spring tide at the sea ; but cowardice is not an indulgence for one of my race, so I screwed up my lips and pricked my ears to learn my duty in the unpleasant emergency of drowning.

"It doesn't mean being drowned yourself," Rupert continued, "but what to do when another person has been drowned."

The emergency was undoubtedly easier, and I gave a cheerful attention as Rupert began to question us.

"Supposing a man had been drowned in the canal, and was brought ashore, and you were the only people there, what would you do with him ?"

I was completely nonplussed. I felt quite sure I could do nothing with him, he would be so heavy ; but I felt equally certain that this was not the answer which Rupert expected, so I left the question to Henrietta's readier wit. She knitted her thick eyebrows for some minutes, partly with perplexity, and partly because of the sunshine reflected from the cucumber-frame, and then said, —

"We should bury him in a vault; Charlie and I *couldn't* dig a grave deep enough."

I admired Henrietta's foresight, but Rupert was furious.

"How *silly* you are!" he exclaimed, knocking over the top of the rhubarb-pot table and the empty glass in his wrath. "Of course I don't mean a dead man. I mean what would you do to bring a partly-drowned man to life again?"

"That wasn't what you *said*," cried Henrietta, tossing her head.

"I let you come to my lecture," grumbled Rupert bitterly, as he stooped to set his table right, "and this is the way you behave!"

"I'm very sorry, Rupert, dear," said Henrietta. "Indeed, I only mean to do my best, and I do like your lecture so very much!"

"So do I," I cried, "very, very much!" And by a simultaneous impulse Henrietta and I both clapped our hands vehemently. This restored Rupert's self-complacency, and he bowed and continued the lecture. From this we learned that the drowned man should be turned over on his face, to let the canal water run out of his mouth and ears, and that his wet clothes should be got off, and he should be

made dry and warm as quickly as possible, and placed in a comfortable position, with the head and shoulders slightly raised. All this seemed quite feasible to us. Henrietta had dressed and undressed lots of dolls, and I pictured myself filling a hot-water bottle at the kitchen boiler with an air of responsibility that should scare all lighter-minded folk. But the directions for "restoring breathing" troubled our sincere desire to learn; and this, even though Henrietta practised for weeks afterwards upon me. I represented the drowned man, and she drew my arms above my head for "*inspiration*," and counted "one, two;" and doubled them and drove them back for "*expiration;*" but it tickled, and I laughed, and we could not feel at all sure that it would have made the drowned man breathe again.

Meanwhile, Rupert went on with the course of lectures, and taught us how to behave in the events of a fire in the house, an epidemic in the neighborhood, a bite from a mad dog, a chase by a mad bull, broken limbs, runaway horses, a chimney on fire, or a young lady burning to death. The lectures were not only delightful in themselves, but they furnished us with a

whole set of new games, for Henrietta and I zealously practised every emergency as far as the nature of things would allow. Covering our faces with wet cloths to keep off the smoke, we crept on our hands and knees to rescue a fancy cripple from an imaginary burning house, because of the current of air which, Rupert told us, was to be found near the floor. We fastened Baby Cecil's left leg to his right by pocket-handkerchiefs at the ankle, and above and below the knee, pretending that it was broken, and must be kept steady till we could convey him to the doctor. But for some unexplained reason Baby Cecil took offence at this game, and I do not think he could have howled and roared louder under the worst of real compound fractures. We had done it so skilfully that we were greatly disgusted by his unaccommodating spirit and his obstinate refusal to be put into the litter we had made out of Henrietta's stilts and a railway rug. We put a Scotch terrier in instead; but when one end of the litter gave way and he fell out, we were not sorry that the emergency was a fancy one, and that no broken limbs were really dependent upon our well-meant efforts.

There was one thing about Rupert's lectures which disappointed me. His emergencies were all things that happened in the daytime. Now I should not have liked the others to know that I was ever afraid of anything; but, really and truly, I was sometimes a little frightened — not of breaking my leg, or a house on fire, or an apoplectic fit, or anything of that sort, but — of things in the dark. Every half holiday I hoped there would be something about what to do with robbers or ghosts, but there never was. I do not think there can have been any emergencies of that kind in the yellow leather book.

On the whole, I fancy Rupert found us satisfactory pupils, for he never did give up the lectures in a huff, though he sometimes threatened to do so, when I asked stupid questions, or Henrietta argued a point.

CHAPTER II.

HENRIETTA. — A FAMILY CHRONICLE. — THE SCHOOL MIMIC. — MY FIRST FIGHT.

HENRIETTA often argued points, which made Rupert very angry. He said that even if she were in the right, that had nothing to do with it, for girls oughtn't to dispute or discuss. And then Henrietta argued that point too.

Rupert and Henrietta often squabbled, and always about the same sort of thing. I am sure he would have been *very* kind to her if she would have agreed with him, and done what he wanted. He often told me that the gentlemen of our family had always been courteous to women, and I think he would have done anything for Henrietta if it had not been that she would do everything for herself.

When we wanted to vex her very much, we used to call her "Monkey," because we knew she liked to be like a boy. She persuaded

Mother to let her have her boots made like ours, because, she said, the roads were so rough and muddy (which they are). And we found two of her books with her name written in, and she had put "Henry," and Rupert wrote Etta after it, and "Monkey" after that. So she tore the leaves out. Her hair was always coming out of curl. It was very dark, and when it fell into her eyes she used to give her head a peculiar shake and toss, so that half of it fell the wrong way, and there was a parting at the side, like our partings. Nothing made Rupert angrier than this.

Henrietta was very good at inventing things. Once she invented a charade quite like a story. Rupert was very much pleased with it, because he was to act the hero, who was to be a young cavalier of a very old family — our family. He was to arrive at an inn; Henrietta made it the real old inn in the middle of the town, and I was the innkeeper, with Henrietta's pillow to make me fat, and one of Nurse's clean aprons. Then he was to ask to spend a night in the old castle, and Henrietta made that the real Castle, which was about nine miles off, and which belonged to our cousin, though he never

spoke to us. And a ghost was to appear, — the ghost of the ancestor in the miniature in Mother's bedroom. Henrietta did the ghost in a white sheet; and with her hair combed, and a burnt cork mustache, she looked so exactly like the picture that Rupert started when she came in, and stared; and Mother said he had acted splendidly.

Henrietta was wonderfully like the picture. Much more like than Rupert ever was, which rather vexed him, because that ancestor was one of the very bravest, and his name was Rupert. He was rather vexed, too, when she rode the pony bare-backed which had kicked him off. But I think the pony was fonder of Henrietta, which perhaps made it easier for her to manage it. She used to feed it with bits of bread. It got them out of her pocket.

One of the things Henrietta could not do as well as Rupert was cricket. Rupert was one of the best players in the school. Henrietta used to want to play with us at home, and she and I did play for a bit, before breakfast, in the drying-ground; but Rupert said, if I encouraged her in being unladylike, he would not let me come to the school matches. He said I might

"SHE RODE THE PONY BAREBACKED."

take my choice, and play either with girls or boys, but not with both. But I thought it would be very mean to leave Henrietta in the lurch. So I told her I would stick by her, as Rupert had not actually forbidden me. He had given me my choice, and he always kept his word. But she would not let me. She pretended that she did not mind; but I knew she did, for I could see afterwards that she had been crying. However, she would not play, and Mother said she had much rather she did not, as she was so afraid of her getting hit by the ball. So that settled it, and I was very glad not to have to give up going to the school matches.

The school we went to was the old town grammar school. It was a very famous one; but it was not so expensive as big public schools are, and I believe this was why we lived in this town after my father's death, for Mother was not at all rich.

The grammar school was very large, and there were all sorts of boys there — sons of gentlemen, and tradesmen, and farmers. Some of the boys were so very dirty, and had such horrid habits out of school, that when Rupert was thirteen, and I was ten, he called a council at

the beginning of the half, and a lot of the boys formed a committee and drew up the code of honor, and we all subscribed to it.

The code of honor was to forbid a lot of things that had been very common in the school: lying, cheating over bargains, telling tales, bragging, bad language, and what the code called "conduct unbecoming schoolfellows and gentlemen." There were a lot of rules in it, too, about clean nails, and shirts, and collars, and socks, and things of that sort. If any boy refused to agree to it, he had to fight with Thomas Johnson.

There could not have been a better person than Rupert to make a code of honor. We have always been taught that honor was the watchword of our family — dearer than anything that could be gained or lost, very much dearer than mere life. The motto of our arms came from an ancestor who lost the favor of the King by refusing to do something — against his conscience — for which he would have been rewarded. It is, "Honor before honors."

I can just remember the man, with iron-gray hair and gold spectacles, who came to our house after my father's death. I think he was a

lawyer. He took lots of snuff, so that Henrietta sneezed when he kissed her, which made her very angry. He put Rupert and me in front of him, to see which of us was most like my father, and I can recall the big pinch of snuff he took, and the sound of his voice saying, "Be like your father, boys! He was as good as he was gallant. And there never lived a more honorable gentleman."

Every one said the same. We were very proud of it, and always boasted about our father to the new nursemaids, or any other suitable hearer. I was a good deal annoyed by one little maid, who, when I told her, over our nursery tea, that my father had been the most honorable of men, began to cry about her father, who was dead too, and said he was "just the same; for in the one and twenty years he kept a public-house, he never put so much as a pinch of salt into the beer, nor even a gill of water, unless it was in the evening at fair-time, when the only way to keep the men from fighting was to give them their liquor so that it could not do them much harm." I was very much offended by the comparison of *my* father, who was an officer and a gentleman of rank,

with *her* father, who was a village publican; but I should like to say that I think now that I was wrong and Jane was right. If her father gave up profit for principle, he *was* like my father, and like the ancestors we get the motto from, and like every other honorable man, of any rank or any trade.

Every time I boasted in the nursery of my father being so honorable, I always finished by saying, that that was why he had the word Honorable before his name, as men in old times used to be called "the Good," or "the Lion Heart." The nursemaids quite believed it, and I believed it myself, till the first week I went to school.

It makes me hot all over to remember what I suffered that week, and for long afterwards. But I think it cured me of bragging, which is a mean, ungentlemanly habit, and of telling everybody everything about myself and my relations, which is very weak-minded.

The second day I was there, one of the boys came up to me and said, with a mock ceremony and politeness which unfortunately took me in, "If I am not mistaken, sir, that esteemed lady, your mother, is an Honorable?"

He was nearly five years older than I; his name was Weston; he had a thin, cadaverous face, a very large nose, and a very melancholy expression. I found out afterwards that he was commonly called "the Clown," and was considered by boys who had been to the London theatres to surpass the best professional comic actors, when he chose to put forth his powers. I did not know this then. I thought him a little formal, but particularly courteous in his manner, and not wishing to be behindhand in politeness, I replied, with as much of his style as I could assume, "Certainly, sir. But that is because my father was an Honorable. My father, sir, was the most honorable of men."

A slight spasm appeared to pass over Weston's face, and then he continued the conversation in a sadder tone than the subject seemed to require; but I supposed that this was due to his recalling that my father was dead.

I confess that it did not need many leading inquiries to draw from me such a narrative of my father's valor and high principle, as well as the noble sentiments and conspicuous bravery which have marked our family from Saxon

times, as I was well accustomed to pour forth for the edification of our nursemaids. I had not proceeded far, when my new friend said, "Won't you walk in and take a seat?" It was recreation time, and the other boys were all out in the playground. I had no special friend as yet; Rupert had stuck to me all the first day, and had now left me to find my own level. I had lingered near the door as we came out, and there Weston had joined me. He now led me back into the deserted schoolroom, and we sat down together on an old black oak locker, at the bottom of the room.

How well I remember the scene! The dirty floor, the empty benches, the torn books sprinkled upon the battered desks, the dusty sunshine streaming in, the white-faced clock on the wall opposite, over which the hands moved with almost incredible rapidity. But when does time ever fly so fast as with people who are talking about themselves or their relations?

Once the mathematical master passed through the room. He glanced at us curiously, but Weston's face was inscrutable, and I — tracing some surprise that I should have secured so

old and so fine-mannered a boy for a friend — held up my head, and went on with my narrative, as fluently as I could, to show that I had parts which justified Weston in his preference.

Tick, tack! went the clock. Click, clack! went my tongue. I fear that quite half an hour must have passed, when a big boy, with an open face, blue eyes, and closely curling fair hair, burst in. On seeing us he exclaimed, "Hulloh!" and then stopped, I suspect in obedience to Weston's eyes, which met his in a brief but expressive gaze. Then Weston turned to me.

"Allow me," said he, "to introduce Mr. Thomas Johnson. He bears a very high character in this school, and it will afford him the keenest satisfaction to hear an authentic account of such a man as your esteemed father, whose character should be held up for the imitation of young gentlemen in every establishment for the education of youth."

I blushed with pride and somewhat with nervousness as Mr. Thomas Johnson seated himself on the locker on the other side of me and begged (with less elegance of expression than my first friend) that I would "go ahead."

I did so. But a very few minutes exhausted the patience of my new hearer. When he had kicked a loose splinter of wood satisfactorily off the leg of one of the desks he began to look at the clock, which quickened my pace from my remoter ancestors to what the colonel of the regiment in which my father was an ensign had said of him. I completed my narrative at last with the lawyer's remark, and added, "and everybody says the same. And *that* is why my father had '*The Honorable*' before his name, just as —" etc., etc.

I had no sooner uttered these words than Johnson started from his seat, and, covering his face with a spotted silk pocket-handkerchief, rushed precipitately from the schoolroom. For one brief instant I fancied I heard him choking with laughter, but when I turned to Weston he got up too, with a look of deep concern. "Mr. Johnson is taken very unwell, I fear," said he. "It is a peculiar kind of spasm to which he is subject. Excuse me!"

He hurried anxiously after his friend, and I was left alone in the schoolroom, into which the other boys shortly began to pour.

"Have you been all alone, old fellow?" said

Rupert kindly; "I hoped you had picked up a chum."

"So I have," was my proud reply; "two chums."

"I hope they're decent fellows," said Rupert. (He had a most pestilent trick of perpetually playing monitor, to the wet-blanketing of all good-fellowship.)

"You know best," said I pertly; "it's Weston and Johnson. We've been together a long time."

"Weston?" cried Rupert. "I hope to goodness, Charlie, you've not been playing the fool!"

"You can ask them," said I, and tossing my head, I went to my proper place.

For the rest of school-time I wore a lofty, and Rupert an anxious, demeanor. Secure on the level of a higher friendship, I was mean enough to snub the friendly advances of one or two of the younger boys.

When we went home at night, I found my mother much more ready than Rupert to believe that my merits had gained for me the regard of two of the upper boys. I was exultantly happy. Not a qualm disturbed the waking dreams in which (after I was in bed) I retold my family tale at even greater length

than before, except that I remembered one or two incidents which, in the excitement of the hour, I had forgotten when in school.

I was rather sorry, too, that, bound by the strictest of injunctions from Rupert and my own promise, I had not been able, ever so casually, to make my new friends aware that among my other advantages was that of being first cousin to a peer, the very one who lived at the Castle. The Castle was a show place, and I knew that many of my schoolfellows were glad enough to take their friends and go themselves to be shown by the housekeeper the pictures of *my* ancestors. On this point they certainly had an advantage over me. I had not seen the pictures. Our cousin never called on us, and never asked us to the Castle, and of course we could not go to our father's old home like common holiday-making townspeople.

I would rather not say very much about the next day. It must seem almost incredible that I could have failed to see that Weston and Johnson were making fun of me; and I confess that it was not for want of warnings that I had made a fool of myself.

I had looked forward to going to school with

about equal measures of delight and dread ; my pride and ambition longed for this first step in life, but Rupert had filled me with a wholesome awe of its stringent etiquette, its withering ridicule, and unsparing severities. However, in his anxiety to make me modest and circumspect, I think he rather overpainted the picture, and when I got through the first day without being bullied, and made such creditable friends on the second, I began to think that Rupert's experience of school life must be due to some lack of those social and conversational powers with which I seemed to be better endowed. And then Weston's acting would have deceived a wiser head than mine. And the nursemaids had always listened so willingly !

As it happened, Rupert was unwell next day and could not go to school. He was obviously afraid of my going alone, but I had no fears. My self-satisfaction was not undone till playtime. Then, not a boy dispersed to games. They all gathered round Weston in the playground, and with a confident air I also made my way to his side. As he turned his face to me I was undeceived.

Weston was accustomed — at such times as

suited his caprice and his resources — to give exhibitions of his genius for mimicry to the rest of the boys. I had heard from Rupert of these entertainments, which were much admired by the school. They commonly consisted of funny dialogues between various worthies of the place, well known to everybody, which made Weston's audience able to judge of the accuracy of his imitations. From the head-master to the idiot who blew the organ bellows in church, every inhabitant of the place who was gifted with any recognizable peculiarity was personated at one time or another by the wit of our school. The favorite imitation of all was supposed to be one of the Dialogues of Plato, "omitted by some strange oversight in the edition which graces the library of our learned and respected doctor," Weston would say with profound gravity. The Dialogue was between Dr. Jessop and Silly Billy, — the idiot already referred to, — and the apposite Latin quotations of the head-master and his pompous English, with the inapposite replies of the organ-blower, given in the local dialect and Billy's own peculiar jabber, were supposed to form a masterpiece of mimicry.

Little did I think that my family chronicle was to supply Weston with a new field for his talents.

In the midst of my shame, I could hardly help admiring the clever way in which he had remembered all the details, and twisted them into a comic ballad, which he had composed overnight, and which he now recited with a mock heroic air and voice which made every point tell, and kept the boys in convulsions of laughter. Not a smile crossed his long lantern-jawed face; but Mr. Thomas Johnson made no effort this time to hide a severe fit of his peculiar spasms in his spotted handkerchief.

Sometimes at night, in the very bottom of my own heart, when the darkness seemed thick with horrors, and when I could not make up my mind whether to keep my ears strained to catch the first sound of anything dreadful, or to pull the blankets over my head and run the risk of missing it, — in such moments, I say, I have had a passing private doubt whether I had inherited my share of the family instinct of courage at a crisis.

It was therefore a relief to me to feel that in

this moment of despair, when I was only waiting till the boys, being no longer amused by Weston, should turn to amuse themselves with me, my first and strongest feeling was a sense of relief that Rupert was not at school, and that I could bear the fruits of my own folly on my own shoulders. To be spared his hectoring and lecturing, his hurt pride, his reproaches, and rage with me, and a probable fight with Weston, in which he must have been seriously hurt and I should have been blamed, — this was some comfort.

I had got my lesson well by heart. Fifty thousand preachers in fifty thousand pulpits could never have taught me so effectually as Weston's ballad and the laughter of his audience, that there is less difference than one would like to believe between the vanity of bragging of oneself and the vanity of bragging of one's relations. Also, that it is not dignified or discreet to take new acquaintances into your entire confidence; and that, even if one is blessed with friends of such quick sympathy that they really enjoy hearing about people they have never seen, it is well not to abuse the privilege, and now and then to

allow them an "innings" at describing *their* remarkable parents, brothers, sisters, and remoter relatives.

I realized all this fully as I stood, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, at the very elbow of my tormentor. But I am glad to know that I would not have run away even if I could. My resolution grew stubborner with every peal of laughter, to bear whatever might come with pluck and good temper. I had been a fool, but I would show that I was not a coward.

I was very glad that Rupert's influenza kept him at home for a few days. I told him briefly that I had been bullied, but that it was my own fault, and I would rather say no more about it. I begged him to promise that he would not take up my quarrel in any way, but leave me to fight it out for myself, which he did. When he came back, I think he regretted his promise. Happily, he never heard all the ballad, but the odd verses which the boys sang about the place put him into a fury. It was a long time before he forgave me, and I doubt if he ever quite forgave Weston.

I held out as well as I could. I made no complaint, and kept my temper. I must say

that Henrietta behaved uncommonly well to me at this time.

"After all, you know, Charlie," she said, "you've not done anything *really wrong or dishonorable.*" This was true, and it comforted me.

Except Henrietta, I really had not a friend; for Rupert was angry with me, and the holding up at school only made me feel worse at home.

At last, the joke began to die out, and I was getting on very well, but for one boy, a heavy-looking fellow with a pasty face, who was always creeping after me and asking me to tell him about my father. "Johnson Minor," we called him. He was a younger brother of Thomas Johnson, the champion of the code of honor.

He was older than I, but he was below me in class, and though he was bigger, he was not a very great deal bigger; and if there is any truth in the stories I have so often told, our family has been used to fight against odds for many generations.

I thought about this a good deal, and measured Johnson Minor with my eye. At last, I got Henrietta to wrestle and box with me for practice.

She was always willing to do anything tom-boyish, indeed, she was generally willing to do anything one wanted, and her biceps were as hard as mine, for I pinched them to see. We

got two pairs of gloves, much too big for us, and stuffed cotton-wool in to make them like boxing-gloves, as we used to stuff out the buff-colored waistcoat when we acted old gentleman

in it. But it did not do much good; for I did not like to hurt Henrietta when I got a chance, and I do not think she liked to hurt me. So I took to dumb-belling every morning in my night-shirt; and at last I determined I would have it out with Johnson Minor, once for all.

One afternoon, when the boys had been very friendly with me, and were going to have me in the paper chase on Saturday, he came up in the old way and began asking me about my father, quite gravely, like a sort of poor imitation of Weston. So I turned round and said, "Whatever my father was, — he's dead. Your father's alive, Johnson, and if you weren't a coward, you wouldn't go on bullying a fellow who hasn't got one."

"I'm a coward, am I, Master Honorable?" said Johnson, turning scarlet, and at the word *Honorable* I thought he had broken my nose. I never felt such pain in my life, but it was the only pain I felt on the occasion; afterwards I was too much excited. I am sorry that I cannot remember very clearly about it, which I should have liked to do, as it was my first fight.

There was no time to fight properly. I was

obliged to do the best I could. I made a sort of rough plan in my head, that I would cling to Johnson as long as I was able, and hit him whenever I got a chance. I did not quite know when he was hitting me from when I was hitting him; but I know that I held on, and that the ground seemed to be always hitting us both.

How long we had been struggling and cuffing and hitting (less scientifically but more effectually than when Henrietta and I flourished our stuffed driving-gloves, with strict and constant reference to the woodcuts in a sixpenny Boxer's Guide) before I got slightly stunned, I do not know; when I came around I was lying in Weston's arms, and Johnson Minor was weeping bitterly (as he believed) over my corpse. I fear Weston had not allayed his remorse.

My great anxiety was to shake hands with Johnson. I never felt more friendly towards any one.

He met me in the handsomest way. He apologized for speaking of my father, — "Since you don't like it," he added, with an appearance of sincerity which puzzled me at the time, and which I did not understand till afterwards, —

and I apologized for calling him a coward. We were always good friends, and our fight made an end of the particular chaff which had caused it.

It reconciled Rupert to me, too, which was my greatest gain.

Rupert is quite right. There is nothing like being prepared for emergencies. I suppose, as I was stunned, that Johnson got the best of it; but judging from his appearance as we washed ourselves at the school pump, I was now quite prepared for the emergency of having to defend myself against any boy not twice my own size.

CHAPTER III.

SCHOOL CRICKET. — LEMON-KALI. — THE BOYS' BRIDGE. — AN UNEXPECTED EMERGENCY.

RUPERT and I were now the best of good friends again. I cared more for his favor than for the good-will of any one else, and kept as much with him as I could.

I played cricket with him in the school matches. At least, I did not bat or bowl, but I — and some of the junior fellows — "fielded out;" and when Rupert was waiting for the ball, I would have given my life to catch quickly and throw deftly. I used to think no one ever looked so handsome as he did in his orange-colored shirt, white flannel trousers, and the cap which Henrietta made him. He and I had spent all our savings on that new shirt, for Mother would not get him a new one. She did not like cricket, or anything at which people could hurt themselves. But Johnson

Major had got a new sky-blue shirt and cap, and we did not like Rupert to be outdone by him, for Johnson's father is only a canal-carrier.

But the shirt emptied our pockets, and made the old cap look worse than ever. Then Henrietta, without saying a word to us, bought some orange flannel, and picked the old cap to pieces and cut out a new one by it, and made it all herself, with a button and a stiff peak and everything; and it really did perfectly, and looked very well, in the sunshine, over Rupert's brown face and glossy black hair.

There always was sunshine when we played cricket. The hotter it was, the better we liked it. We had a bottle of lemon-kali powder on the ground, and I used to have to make fizzing-cup in a tin mug for the other boys. I got the water from the canal.

Lemon-kali is delicious on a very hot day — so refreshing! But I sometimes fancied I felt a little sick *afterwards*, if I had had a great deal. And Bustard (who was always called Bustard-Plaster, because he was the doctor's son) said it was the dragons out of the canal

water lashing their tails inside us. He had seen them under his father's microscope.

The field where we played was on the banks of the canal, the opposite side to the town. I believe it was school property. At any rate we had the right of playing there.

We had to go nearly a quarter of a mile out of the way before there was a bridge, and it was very vexatious to toil a quarter of a mile down on one side and a quarter of a mile up on the other to get at a meadow which lay directly opposite to the school. Weston wrote a letter about it to the weekly paper, asking the town to build us a bridge. He wrote splendid letters, and this was one of his very best. He

said that if the town council laughed at the notion of building a bridge for boys, they must remember that the boys of to-day were the men of to-morrow (which we all thought a grand sentence, though MacDonald, a very accurate-minded fellow, said it would really be some years before most of us were grown up). Then Weston called us the Rising Generation, and showed that, in all probability, the Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Primate of the years to come, now played "all unconscious of their future fame" in the classic fields that lay beyond the water, and promised that in the hours of our coming greatness we would look back with gratitude to the munificence of our native city. He put lots of Latin in, and ended with some Latin verses of his own, in which he made the Goddess of the Stream plead for us as her sons. By "the Stream" he meant the canal, for we had no river, which of course Weston couldn't help.

How we watched for the next week's paper! But it wasn't in. They never did put his things in, which mortified him sadly. His greatest ambition was to get something of his own invention printed. Johnson said he believed

it was because Weston always put something personal in the things he wrote. He was very sarcastic, and couldn't help making fun of people.

It was all the kinder of Weston to do his best about the bridge, because he was not much of a cricketer himself. He said he was too short-sighted, and that it suited him better to poke in the hedges for beetles. He had a splendid collection of insects. Bustard used to say that he poked with his nose, as if he were an insect himself, and it was a proboscis; but he said, too, that his father said it was a pleasure to see Weston make a section of anything, and prepare objects for the microscope. His fingers were as clever as his tongue.

It was not long after Rupert got his new shirt and cap that a very sad thing happened.

We were playing cricket one day, as usual. It was very hot, and I was mixing some lemon-kali at the canal, and holding up the mug to tempt Weston over, who was on the other side with his proboscis among the water-plants, collecting larvæ. Rupert was batting, and a new fellow, who bowled much more swiftly than we were accustomed to, had the ball. I was

straining my ears to catch what Weston was shouting to me between his hands, when I saw him start and point to the cricketers, and turning round; I saw Rupert lying on the ground.

The ball had hit him on the knee and knocked him down. He struggled up, and tried to stand; but whilst he was saying it was nothing and scolding the other fellows for not going on, he fell down again, fainting from pain.

"The leg's broken, depend upon it," said Bustard Plaster; "shall I run for my father?"

I thanked him earnestly, for I did not like to leave Rupert myself. But Johnson Major, who was kicking off his cricketing shoes, said, "It'll take an hour to get 'round; I'll go. Get him some water, and keep his cap on; the sun is blazing." And before we could speak he was in the canal and swimming across.

I went back to the bank for my mug, in which the lemon-kali was fizzing itself out, and with this I got some water for Rupert, and at last he opened his eyes. As I was getting the water, I saw Weston unmooring a boat which was fastened a little farther up. He was evi-

dently coming to help us to get Rupert across the canal.

Bustard's words rang in my ears. Perhaps Rupert's leg was broken. Bustard was a doctor's son, and ought to know. And I have often thought it must be a very difficult thing *to* know, for people's legs don't break right off when they break. My first feeling had been utter bewilderment and misery; but I collected my senses with the reflection that, if I lost my presence of mind in the first real emergency that happened to me, my attendance at Rupert's lectures had been a mockery, and I must be the first fool and coward of my family. And if I failed in the emergency of a broken leg, how could I ever hope to conduct myself with credit over a case of drowning? I did feel thankful that Rupert's welfare did not depend on our pulling his arms up and down in a particular way; but as Weston was just coming ashore, I took out my pocket-handkerchief, and kneeling down by Rupert said, with as good an air as I could assume, "We must tie the broken leg to the other at the —"

"*Don't touch it*, you young fool!" shrieked

Rupert. And though directly afterwards he begged my pardon for speaking sharply, he would not hear of my touching his leg. So they got him into the boat the best way they could, and Weston sat by him to hold him up; and the boy who had been bowling pulled them across. I wasn't big enough to do either, so I had to run around by the bridge.

I fancy it must be easier to act with presence of mind if the emergency has happened to somebody who has not been used to ordering you about as much as Rupert was used to ordering me.

CHAPTER IV.

A DOUBTFUL BLESSING. — A FAMILY FAILING. — OLD BATTLES. — THE CANAL-CARRIER'S HOME.

When we found that Rupert's leg was not broken, and that it was only a severe blow on his knee, we were all delighted. But when weeks and months went by and he was still lame and very pale, and always tired, we began to count for how long past it would have been set, and poor Rupert quite well, if the leg had been broken. And when Johnny Bustard said that legs and arms were often stronger after being broken than before (if they were properly set, as his father could do them), we felt that, if Gregory would bowl for people's shins, he had better break them at once, and let Mr. Bustard make a good job of them.

The first part of the time Rupert made light of his accident, and wanted to go back to school,

and was very irritable and impatient. But as the year went on, he left off talking about its being all nonsense, and though he suffered a great deal, he never complained. I used quite to miss his lecturing me, but he did not even squabble with Henrietta now.

This reminds me of a great fault of mine, — I am afraid it was a family failing, though it is a very mean one, — I was jealous. If I were "particular friends" with any one, I liked to have him all to myself; when Rupert was "out" with me because of the Weston affair, I was "particular friends" with Henrietta. I did not exactly give her up when Rupert and I were all right again, but when she complained one day (I think *she* was jealous, too!), I said, "I'm particular friends with you *as a sister* still; but you know Rupert and I are both boys."

I did love Rupert very dearly, and I would have given up anything and everything to serve him and wait upon him now that he was laid up; but I would rather have had him all to myself, whereas Henrietta was now his particular friend. It is because I know how meanly I felt about it that I should like to say how

good she was. My mother was very delicate, and she had a horror of accidents; but Henrietta stood at Mr. Bustard's elbow all the time he was examining Rupert's knee, and after that she always did the fomentations and things. At first, Rupert said she hurt him, and would have Nurse to do it; but Nurse hurt him so much more that then he would not let anybody but Henrietta touch it. And he never called her Monkey now, and I could see how she tried to please him. One day she came down to breakfast with her hair all done up in the way that was in fashion then, like a grown-up young lady, and I think Rupert was pleased, though she looked rather funny and very red. And so Henrietta nursed him altogether, and used to read battles to him as he lay on the sofa; and Rupert made plans of the battles on cardboard, and moved bits of pith out of the elder-tree about for the troops, and showed Henrietta how, if he had had the moving of them really, and had done it quite differently from the way the generals did, the other side would have won instead of being beaten.

And Mother used to say, "That's just the way your poor father used to go on! As if it

wasn't enough to have to run the risk of being killed or wounded once or twice yourself, without bothering your head about battles you've nothing to do with."

And when he did the battle in which my father fell, and planted the battery against which he led his men for the last time, and where he was struck under the arm with which he was waving his sword over his head, Rupert turned whiter than ever, and said, "Good heavens, Henrietta! Father *limped* up to that battery! He led his men for two hours after he was wounded in the leg, before he fell, — and here I sit and grumble at a knock from a cricket-ball!"

Just then Mr. Bustard came in, and when he shook Rupert's hand he kept his fingers on it and shook his own head; and he said there was an "abnormal condition of the pulse," in such awful tones that I was afraid it was something that Rupert would die of. But Henrietta understood better, and she would not let Rupert do that battle any more.

Rupert's friends were very kind to him when he was ill, but the kindest of all was Thomas Johnson.

Johnson's grandfather was a canal-carrier, and made a good deal of money, and Johnson's father got the money and went on with the business. We had a great discussion once in the nursery as to whether Johnson's father was a gentleman, and Rupert ran downstairs and into the drawing-room, shouting, "Now, Mother, *is* a carrier a gentleman?"

And Mother, who was lying on the sofa, said, "Of course not. What silly things you children do ask! Why can't you amuse yourselves in the nursery? It is very hard you should come and disturb me for such a nonsensical question."

Rupert was always good to Mother, and he shut the drawing-room door very gently. Then he came rushing up to the nursery to say that Mother said, "Of course not." But Henrietta said, "What did you ask her?" And when Rupert told her, she said, "Of course Mother thought you meant one of those men who have carts to carry things, with a hood on the top and a dog underneath."

Johnson's father and grandfather were not carriers of that kind. They owned a lot of canal-boats and one or two big barges, which took all kinds of things all the way to London.

Mr. Johnson used to say, "In my father's time, men of business lived near their work both in London and the country. That's why my house is close to the wharf. I'm not ashamed of my trade, and the place is very comfortable, so I shall stick to it. Tom may move into the town, and give the old house to the foreman when I am gone, if he likes to play the fine gentleman."

Tom would be very foolish if he did. It is the dearest old house one could wish for. It was built of red brick, but the ivy has covered it so thickly that it is clipped around the old-fashioned windows like a hedge. The gardens are simply perfect. In summer you can pick as many flowers and eat as much fruit as you like, and if that is not the use and beauty of a garden, I do not know what is.

Johnson's father was very proud of him, and let him have anything he liked; and in the midsummer holidays Johnson used to bring his father's trap and take Rupert out for drives, and Mrs. Johnson used to put meat pies and strawberries in a basket under the seat, so that it was a kind of picnic, for the old horse had belonged to Mr. Bustard and was a capital one for standing still.

It was partly because of the Johnsons being so kind to Rupert that Johnson Minor and I became chums at school, and partly because the fight had made us friendly and I had no Rupert now, and was rather jealous of his taking completely to Henrietta, — and most of all, I fancy, because Johnson Minor was determined to be friends with me. He was a very odd fellow. There was nothing he liked so much as wonderful stories about people, and I never heard such wonderful stories as he told himself. When we became friends, he told me he had never meant to bully me when he asked about my father; he really did want to hear about his battles, and so forth.

But the utmost I could tell him about my father was nothing to the tales he told me about his grandfather, the navy captain.

CHAPTER V.

THE NAVY CAPTAIN. — SEVEN PARROTS IN A FUCHSIA-TREE. — THE HARBOR LION AND THE SILVER CHAIN. — THE LEGLESS GIANTS. — DOWN BELOW. — JOHNSON'S WHARF.

THE Johnsons were very fond of their father, he was such a good, kind man ; but I think they would have been glad if he had had a profession instead of being a canal-carrier, and I am sure it pleased them to think that Mrs. Johnson's father had been a navy captain, and that his portrait — uniform and all — hung over the horsehair sofa in the dining-room, near the window where the yellow roses used to come in.

If I could get the room to myself, I used to kneel on the sofa, on one of the bolsters, and gaze at the faded little picture till I lost my balance on the slippery horsehair, from the intensity of my interest in the hero of Johnson

Minor's tales. Every time, I think, I expected to see some change in the expression of the Captain's red face, adapting it better to what, by his grandson's account, his character must have been. It seemed so odd he should look so wooden after having seen so much.

The Captain had been a native of South Devon.

"Raleigh, Drake, my grandfather, and lots of other great sailors were born in Devonshire," Johnson said. He certainly did brag; but he spoke so slowly and quietly that it did not sound so much like bragging as it would have done if he had talked faster, I think.

The Captain had lived at Dartmouth, and of this place Johnson gave me such descriptions that, to this day, the name of Dartmouth has a romantic sound in my ears, though I know now that all the marvels were Johnson's own invention, and barely founded upon the real quaintness of the place, of which he must have heard from his mother. It became the highest object of my ambition to see the Captain's native city. That there must be people — shopkeepers, for instance, and a man to keep the post-office — who lived there all along, was a

fact that I could not realize sufficiently to envy them.

Johnson — or Fred, as I used to call him by this time — only exaggerated the truth about the shrubs that grow in the greenhouse atmosphere of South Devon, when he talked of the Captain's fuchsia-trees being as big as the old willows by the canal wharf; but the parrots must have been a complete invention. He said the Captain had seven. Two green, two crimson, two blue, and one violet with an orange-colored beak and gray lining to his wings; and that they built nests in the fuchsia-trees of sandal-wood shavings, and lined them with the Captain's silk pocket-handkerchiefs. He said that though the parrots stole the Captain's handkerchiefs, they were all very much attached to him; but they quarrelled among themselves, and swore at each other in seven dialects of the West Coast of Africa.

Mrs. Johnson herself once showed me a little print of the harbor, and told me that it was supposed that in old times an iron chain was stretched from rock to rock across its mouth as a means of defence. And that afternoon Fred told me a splendid story about the chain, and

how it was made of silver, and that each link was worth twenty pounds, and how, at the end where it was fastened with a padlock every night, at sunset to keep out the French, a lion sat on a ledge of rock at the harbor's mouth, with the key tied round his neck by a sea-green ribbon. He had to have a new ribbon on the first Sunday in every month, Fred said, because his mane dirtied them so fast. A story which Fred had, of his grandfather's single-handed encounter with this lion on one occasion, when the gallant Captain would let a brig in distress into the harbor after sunset, and the lion would not let him have the key, raised my opinion of his courage and his humanity to the highest point. But what he did at home was nothing to the exploits which Fred recounted of him in foreign lands.

I fancy Fred must have read some real accounts of South America, the tropical forests, the wonderful birds and flowers, and the ruins of those buried cities which have no history; and that on these real marvels he built up his own romances of the Great Stone City, where the Captain encountered an awful race of giants with no legs, who carved stones

into ornaments with clasp-knives as the Swiss cut out pretty things in wood, and cracked the cocoanuts with their fingers. I am sure he invented flowers as he went along, when he was telling me about the forests. He used to look around the garden (which would have satisfied any one who had not seen or heard of what the Captain had come across), and say in his slow way, "The blue chalice-flower was about the shape of that magnolia, only twice as big, and just the color of the gentians in the border, and it had a great white tassel hanging out like the cactus in the parlor window, and all the leaves were yellow underneath; and it smelt like rosemary."

If the Captain's experiences in other countries outshone what had befallen him in his native land, both of these paled before the wonders he had seen, and the emergencies he had been placed in at sea. Fred told me that his grandfather had a diving-bell of his own on board his own ship, and the things he saw when he went down in it must have made his remembrances of the South American forests appear tame by comparison.

Once, in the middle of the Pacific, the Captain

dropped down in his bell into the midst of a society of sea people who had no hair, but the backs of their heads were shaped like sou'-wester hats. The front rim formed one eye-brow for both eyes, and they could move the peak behind as beavers move their tails, and it helped them to go up and down in the water. They were not exactly mermaids, Fred said; they had no particular tail, — it all ended in a kind of fringe of seaweed, which swept after them, when they moved, like the train of a lady's dress. The Captain was so delighted with them that he stayed below much longer than usual; but in an unlucky moment some of the sea people let the water into the diving-bell, and the Captain was nearly drowned. He did become senseless, but when his body floated, it was picked up and restored to life by the first mate, who, with tears in his eyes, had been cruising over the spot, in the ship's boat, for seven days without taking anything to eat. "*He* was a Dartmouth man, too," said Fred Johnson.

"He evidently knew what to do in the emergency of drowning," thought I.

I feel as if any one who hears of Fred's

stories must think he was a liar. But he really was not. Mr. Johnson was very strict with the boys in some ways, though he was so good-natured, and Fred had been taught to think a lie to get himself out of a scrape, or anything of that sort, quite as wrong as we should have thought it. But he liked *telling* things. I believe he made them up and amused himself with them in his own head if he had no one to listen. He used to say, "Come and sit in the kitchen-garden this afternoon, and I'll *tell* you." And whether he meant me to think them true or not, I certainly did believe in his stories.

One thing always struck me as very odd about Fred Johnson. He was very fond of fruit, and when we sat on the wall and ate the white currants with pounded sugar in a mug between us, I believe he always ate more than I did, though he was "telling" all the time, and I had nothing to do but listen and eat.

He certainly talked very slowly, in a dreary, monotonous sort of voice, which suited his dull, pasty face better than it suited the subject of his exciting narratives. But I think it seemed to make one all the more

impatient to hear what was coming. A very favorite place of ours for "telling" was the wharf (Johnson's wharf, as it was called), where the canal-boats came and went, and loaded and unloaded. We made a "coast-guard station" among some old timber in the corner, and here we used to sit and watch for the boats.

When a real barge came we generally went over it, for the men knew Fred, and were very good-natured. The barges seemed more like ships than the canal-boats did. They had masts, and could sail when they got into the river. Sometimes we went down into the cabin, and peeped into the little berths with sliding shutter fronts, and the lockers, which were like a fixed seat running around two sides of the cabin, with lids opening and showing places to put away things in. I was not famous in the nursery for keeping my things very tidy, but I fancied I could stow my clothes away to perfection in a locker, and almost cook my own dinner with the bargeman's little stove.

And every time a barge was loaded up, and the bargemaster took his post at the rudder,

whilst the old horse strained himself to start, and when the heavy boat swung slowly down the canal and passed out of sight, I felt more and more sorry to be left behind upon the wharf.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES. — THE MONKEY-BARGE AND THE DOG. — WAR, PLAGUE, AND FIRE. — THE DULLNESS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

THERE were two churches in our town. Not that the town was so very large or the churches so very small as to make this needful. On the contrary, the town was of modest size, with no traces of having ever been much bigger, and the churches were very large and very handsome. That is, they were fine outside, and might have been very imposing within but for the painted galleries which blocked up the arches above, and the tall pews which dwarfed the majestic rows of pillars below. They were not more than a quarter of a mile apart. One was dedicated to St. Philip, and the other to St. James, and they were commonly called "the brother churches." In the tower of each hung a peal of eight bells.

One clergyman served both the brother churches, and the services were at St. Philip one week, and at St. James the next. We were so accustomed to this that it never struck us as odd. What did seem odd, and perhaps a little dull, was that people in other places should have to go to the same church week after week.

There was only one day in the year on which both the peals of bells were heard, the Feast of SS. Philip and James, which is also May-day. Then there was morning prayer at St. Philip, and evening prayer at St. James, and the bells rang changes and cannons, and went on ringing by turns all the evening, the bell-ringers being escorted from one church to another with May garlands and a sort of triumphal procession. The churches were decorated, and flags put out on the towers, and everybody in the congregation was expected to carry a nosegay.

Rupert and I and Henrietta and Baby Cecil and the servants always enjoyed this thoroughly, and thought the churches delightfully sweet; but my mother said the smell of the cottage nosegays and the noise of the bells made her feel very ill, which was a pity.

Fred Johnson once told me some wonderful stories about the brother churches. We had gone over the canal to a field not far from the cricketing-field, but it was a sort of water-meadow, and lower down, and opposite to the churches, which made us think of them. We had gone there partly to get yellow flags to try and grow them in tubs as Johnson's father did water-lilies, and partly to watch for a canal-boat, or "monkey-barge," which was expected up with coal. Fred knew the old man, and we hoped to go home as part of the cargo if the old man's dog would let us; but he was a rough terrier, with an exaggerated conscience, and strongly objected to anything coming on board the boat which was not in the bill of lading. He could not even reconcile himself to the fact that people not connected with barges took the liberty of walking on the canal-banks.

"He've been a-going up and down with me these fifteen year," said the old man, "and he barks at 'm still." He barked so fiercely at us that Fred would not go on board, to my great annoyance, for I never feel afraid of dogs, and was quite sure I could see a disposition to wag

about the stumpy tail of the terrier, in spite of his "bowfs."

I may have been wrong, but once or twice I fancied that Fred shirked adventures which seemed nothing to me; and I felt this to be very odd, because I am not as brave as I should like to be, and Fred is grandson to the navy captain.

I think Fred wanted to make me forget the canal-boat, which I followed with regretful eyes, for he began talking about the churches.

"It must be splendid to hear all sixteen bells going at once," said he.

"They never do," said I, unmollified.

"They do — *sometimes*," said Fred slowly, and so impressively that I was constrained to answer, "When?"

"In great emergencies," was Fred's reply, which startled me. But we had only lived in the place for part of our lives, and Fred's family belonged to it, so he must know better than I.

"Is it to call the doctor?" I asked, thinking of drowning, and broken bones, and apoplectic fits.

"It's to call everybody," said Fred; "that is,

in time of war, when the town is in danger. And when the Great Plague was here, St. Philip and St. James both tolled all day long with their bells muffled. But when there's a fire they ring backwards, as witches say prayers, you know."

War and the plague had not been here for a very long time, and there had been no fire in the town in my remembrance; but Fred said that awful calamities of the kind had happened within the memory of man, when the town was still built in great part of wood, and that one night, during a high gale, the whole place, except a few houses, had been destroyed by fire. After this the streets were rebuilt of stone and bricks.

These new tales which Fred told me, of places I knew, had a terrible interest peculiarly their own. For the Captain's dangers were over for good now, but war, plague, and fire in the town might come again.

I thought of them by day and dreamed of them by night. Once I remember being awakened, as I fancied, by the clanging of the two peals in discordant unison, and as I opened my eyes a bright light on the wall convinced me

that the town was on fire. Fred's vivid descriptions rushed to my mind, and I looked out expecting to see St. Philip and St. James standing up like dark rocks in a sea of dancing flames, their bells ringing backwards, "as witches say prayers." It was only when I saw both the towers standing gray and quiet above the gray and quiet town, and when I found that the light upon the wall came from the street-lamp below, that my head seemed to grow clearer, and I knew that no bells were ringing, and that those I fancied I heard were only the prolonged echoes of a bad dream.

I was very glad that it was so, and I did not exactly wish for war or the plague to come back; and yet the more I heard of Fred's tales, the more restless I grew because the days were so dull, and because we never went anywhere, and nothing ever happened.

CHAPTER VII.

WE RESOLVE TO RUN AWAY. — SCRUPLES. — BABY CECIL. — I PREPARE. — I RUN AWAY.

I THINK it was Fred's telling me tales of the navy captain's boyhood which put it into our heads that the only way for people at our age, and in our position, to begin a life of adventure is to run away.

The Captain had run away. He ran away from school. But then, the school was one which it made your hair stand on end to hear of. The master must have been a monster of tyranny, the boys little prodigies of wickedness and misery, and the food such as would have been rejected by respectably reared pigs.

It put his grandson and me at a disadvantage that we had no excuses of the kind for running away from the grammar school. Doctor Jessop was a little pompous, but he was sometimes positively kind. There was not even a cruel

usher. I was no dunce, nor was Fred, though he was below me in class, so that we had not even a grievance in connection with our lessons. This made me feel as if there would be something mean and almost dishonorable in running away from school. "I think it would not be fair to the Doctor," said I; "it would look as if he had driven us to it, and he hasn't. We had better wait till the holidays."

Fred seemed more willing to wait than I had expected; but he planned what we were to do when we did go as vigorously as ever.

It was not without qualms that I thought of running away from home. My mother would certainly be greatly alarmed; but then, she was greatly alarmed by so many things to which she afterwards became reconciled! My conscience reproached me more about Rupert and Henrietta. Not one of us had longed for "events" and exploits so earnestly as my sister; and who but Rupert had prepared me for emergencies, not perhaps such as the Captain had had to cope with, but of the kinds recognized by the yellow leather book? We had been very happy together, — Rupert, Henrietta, Baby Cecil, and I, — and we had felt in

common the one defect of our lives, that there were no events in them; and now I was going to begin a life of adventure, to run away and seek my fortune, without even telling them what I was going to do.

On the other hand, that old mean twinge of jealousy was one of my strongest impulses to adventure-seeking, and it urged me to perform my exploits alone. Some people seem to like dangers and adventures whilst the dangers are going on; Henrietta always seemed to think that the pleasantest part; but I confess that I think one of the best parts must be when they are over and you are enjoying the credit of them. When the Captain's adventures stirred me most, I looked forward with a thrill of anticipation to my return home, — modest from a justifiable pride in my achievements, and so covered with renown by my deeds of daring that I should play second fiddle in the family no more, and that Rupert and Henrietta would outbid each other for my "particular" friendship, and Baby Cecil dog my heels to hear the stories of my adventures.

The thought of Baby Cecil was the heaviest pang I felt when I was dissatisfied with the

idea of running away from home. Baby Cecil was the pet of the house. He had been born after my father's death, and from the day he was born everybody conspired to make much of him. Dandy, the Scotch terrier, would renounce a romping ramble with us to keep watch over Baby Cecil when he was really a baby and was only carried for a dull airing in the nursemaid's arms. I can quite understand Dandy's feelings; for if, when one was just preparing for a paper-chase, or anything of that sort, Baby Cecil trotted up and, flinging himself head first into one's arms, after his usual fashion, cried, "Baby Cecil 'ants Charlie to tell him a long, long story — *so much!*" it always ended in one's giving up the race or the scramble, and devoting oneself as sedately as Dandy to his service. But I consoled myself with the thought of how Baby Cecil would delight in me, and what stories I should be able to tell him on my return.

The worst of running away nowadays is that railways and telegrams run faster. I was prepared for any emergency except that of being found and brought home again.

Thinking of this brought to my mind one of Fred's tales of the Captain, about how he was pursued by bloodhounds and escaped by getting into water. Water not only retains no scent, it keeps no track. I think perhaps this is one reason why boys so often go to sea when they run away, — that no one may be able to follow them. It helped my decision that we would go to sea when we ran away, — Fred and I. Besides, there was no other road to strange countries, and no other way of seeing the sea people with the sou'wester heads.

Fred did not seem to have any scruples about leaving his home, which made me feel how much braver he must be than I. But his head was so full of the plans he made for us, and the lists he drew up of natural products of the earth in various places, on which we could live without paying for our living, that he neglected his school work, and got into scrapes about it. This distressed me very much, for I was working my very best that half, on purpose that no one might say that we ran away from our lessons, but that it might be understood that we had gone

solely in search of adventure, like sea-captains or any other grown-up travellers.

All Fred's tales now began with the word "suppose." They were not stories of what had happened to his grandfather, but of what might happen to us. The half-holiday that Mr. Johnson's hay was carted, we sat behind the farthest haycock all the afternoon with an old atlas on our knees, and Fred "supposed" till my brain whirled to think of all that was coming on us. "Suppose we get on board a vessel bound for Singapore, and hide behind some old casks —" he would say, coasting strange continents with his stumpy little forefinger as recklessly as the Captain himself; on which, of course, I asked, "What is Singapore like?" which enabled Fred to close the atlas and lie back among the hay and say whatever he could think of and I could believe.

Meanwhile we saved up our pocket-money and put it in a canvas bag, as being sailor-like. Most of the money was Fred's, but he was very generous about this, and said I was to take care of it, as I was more managing than he. And we practised tree-climbing, to be ready for the

masts, and ate earth-nuts to learn to live upon roots, in case we were thrown upon a desert island. Of course we did not give up our proper meals, as we were not obliged to yet, and I sometimes felt rather doubtful about how we should feel, living upon nothing but roots for breakfast, dinner, and tea. However, I had observed that whenever the Captain was wrecked a barrel of biscuits went ashore soon afterwards, and I hoped it might always be so in wrecks, for biscuits go a long way, — especially sailors' biscuits, which are large.

I made a kind of handbook for adventure-seekers, too, in an old exercise-book, showing what might be expected and should be prepared for in a career like the Captain's. I divided it under certain heads : Hardships, Dangers, Emergencies, Wonders, etc. These were subdivided again, thus : Hardships — 1, Hunger ; 2, Thirst ; 3, Cold ; 4, Heat ; 5, No clothes ; and so forth. I got all my information from Fred, and I read my lists over and over again, to get used to the ideas, and to feel brave. And on the last page I printed in red ink the word "Glory."

And so the half went by and came to an end ; and when the old Doctor gave me my

three prizes, and spoke of what he hoped I would do next half, my blushes were not solely from modest pride.

The first step of our runaway travels had been decided upon long ago. We were to go by barge to London. "And from London you can go anywhere," Fred said.

The day after the holidays began, I saw a canal-boat loading at the wharf, and finding she was bound for London, I told Fred of it. But he said we had better wait for a barge, and that there would be one on Thursday. "Or if you don't think you can be ready by then, we can wait for the next," he added. He seemed quite willing to wait, but (remembering that the Captain's preparations for his longest voyage had only taken him eighteen and a half minutes by the chronometer, which was afterwards damaged in the diving-bell accident, and which I had seen with my own eyes, in confirmation of the story) I said I should be ready any time at half an hour's notice, and Thursday was fixed as the day of our departure.

To facilitate matters, it was decided that Fred should invite me to spend Wednesday with him, and to stay all night, for the barge was

to start at half-past six o'clock on Thursday morning.

I was very busy on Wednesday. I wrote a letter to my mother in which I hoped I made it quite clear that ambition, and not discontent, was leading me to run away. I also made a will, dividing my things fairly between Rupert, Henrietta, and Baby Cecil, in case I should be drowned at sea. My knife, my prayer-book, the ball of string belonging to my kite, and my little tool-box I took away with me. I also took the match-box from the writing-table, but I told mother of it in the letter. The Captain used to light his fires by rubbing sticks together, but I had tried it, and thought matches would be much better, — at any rate, to begin with.

Rupert was lying under the crab-tree, and Henrietta was reading to him, when I went away. Rupert was getting much stronger; he could walk with a stick, and was going back to school next half. I felt a very unreasonable vexation because they seemed quite cheerful. But as I was leaving the garden to go over the fields, Baby Cecil came running after me, with his wooden spade in one hand and a plant of

chickweed in the other, crying, "Charlie, dear! Come and tell Baby Cecil a story." I kissed him, and tied his hat on, which had come off as he ran.

"Not now, Baby," I said; "I am going out now, and you are gardening."

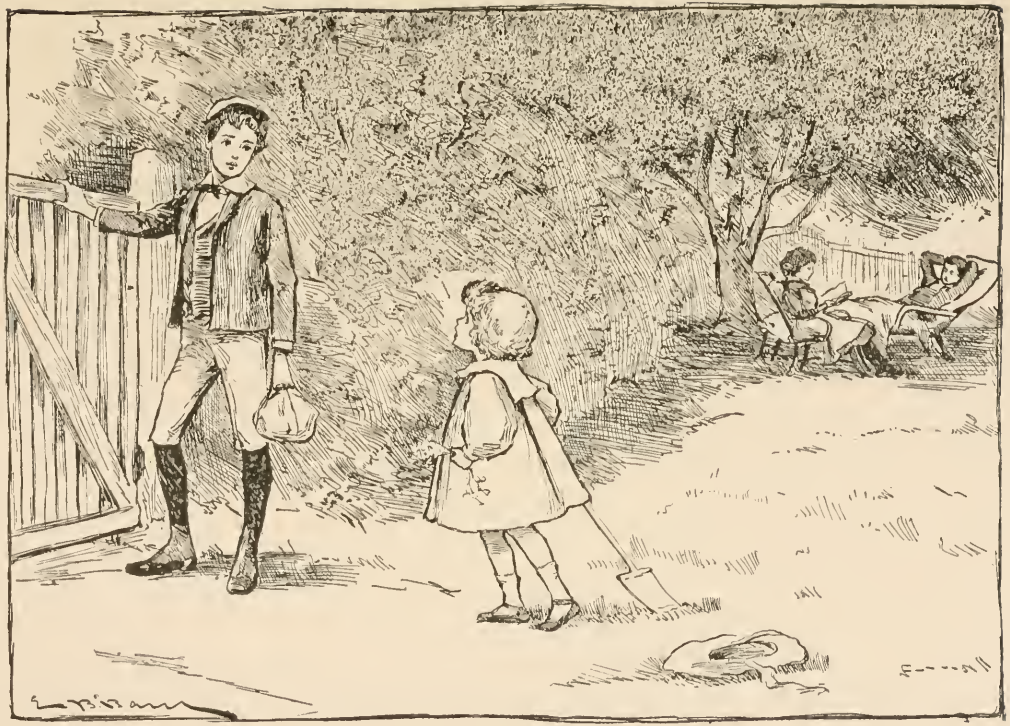
"I don't want to garden," he pleaded. "Where are you going? Take me with you."

"I am going to Fred Johnson's," I said bravely.

Baby Cecil was a very good child, though he was so much petted. He gave a sigh of disappointment, but only said very gravely, "Will you promise, *onyeronor*, to tell me one when you come back?"

"I promise to tell you lots *when I come back*, on my honor," was my answer.

I had to skirt the garden-hedge for a yard or two before turning off across the meadow. In a few minutes I heard a voice on the other side. Baby Cecil had run down the inside, and was poking his face through a hole, and kissing both hands to me. There came into my head a wonder whether his face would be much changed the next time I saw it. I little guessed when and how that would be. But when he cried,



"Come back *very soon*, Charlie, dear," my imperfect valor utterly gave way; and hanging my head, I ran, with hot tears pouring over my face, all the way to Johnson's wharf.

When Fred saw my face he offered to give up the idea if I felt faint-hearted about it. Nothing that he could have said would have dried my tears so soon. Every spark of pride in me blazed up to reject the thought of turning craven now. Besides, I longed for a life of adventure most sincerely; and I was soon quite happy again in the excitement of being so near to what I had longed for.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE GO ON BOARD. — THE PIE. — AN EXPLOSION. — MR. ROWE, THE BARGEMASTER. — THE WHITE LION. — TWO LETTERS. — WE DOUBT MR. ROWE'S GOOD FAITH.

The dew was still heavy on the grass when Fred and I crossed the drying-ground, about five o'clock on Thursday morning, and scrambled through a hedge into our old "coast-guard" corner on the wharf. We did not want to be seen by the bargemaster till we were too far from home to be put ashore.

The freshness of early morning in summer has some quality which seems to go straight to the heart. I felt intensely happy. There lay the barge, the sun shining on the clean deck, and reflected from the dewy edges of the old ropes, and from the bargemaster's zinc basin and pail put out to sweeten in the air.

"She won't leave us behind this time!" I cried, turning triumphantly to Fred.

"Take care of the pie," said Fred.

It was a meat pie which he had taken from the larder this morning; but he had told Mrs. Johnson about it in the letter he had left behind him, and had explained that we took it instead of the breakfast we should otherwise have eaten. We felt that earth-nuts might not be forthcoming on the canal-banks, or even on the wharf at Nine Elms when we reached London.

At about a quarter to six, Johnson's wharf was quite deserted. The bargemaster was having breakfast ashore, and the second man had gone to the stable. "We had better hide ourselves now," I said. So we crept out, and went on board. We had chosen our hiding-place before. Not in the cabin, of course, nor among the cargo, where something extra thrown in at the last moment might smother us, if it did not lead to our discovery, but in the fore part of the boat, in a sort of well or *hold*, where odd things belonging to the barge itself were stowed away, and made sheltered nooks into which we could creep out of sight. Here we found a very convenient corner, and squatted down, with the pie

at our feet, behind a hamper, a box, a coil of rope, a sack of hay, and a very large ball, crossed four ways with rope, and with a rope-tail, which puzzled me extremely.

"It's like a giant tadpole," I whispered to Fred.

"Don't nudge me," said Fred. "My pockets are full, and it hurts."

My pockets were far from light. The money-bag was heavily laden with change, — small in value, but large in coin. The box of matches was with it, and the knife. String, nails, my prayer-book, a pencil, some writing-paper, the handbook, and a more useful hammer than the one in my tool-box, filled another pocket. Some gooseberries and a piece of cake were in my trousers, and I carried the tool-box in my hands. We each had a change of linen, tied up in a pocket-handkerchief. Fred would allow of nothing else. He said that when our jackets and trousers were worn out we must make new clothes out of an old sail.

Waiting is very dull work. After a while, however, we heard voices, and the tramp of the horse, and then the bargemaster and Mr. Johnson's foreman, and other men, kept coming and

going on deck, and for a quarter of an hour we had as many hairbreadth escapes of discovery as the Captain himself could have had in the circumstances. At last somebody threw the bargemaster a bag of something (fortunately soft) which he was leaving behind, and which he chucked on to the top of my head. Then the driver called to his horse, and the barge gave a jerk which threw Fred on to the pie, and in a moment more we were gliding slowly and smoothly down the stream.

When we were fairly off we ventured to peep out a little and stretch our cramped limbs. There was no one on board but the barge-master, and he was at the other end of the vessel, smoking and minding his rudder. The driver was walking on the towing-path, by the old gray horse. The motion of the boat was so smooth that we seemed to be lying still, whilst villages and orchards and green banks and osier-beds went slowly by, as though the world were coming to show itself to us, instead of our going to see the world.

When we passed the town we felt some anxiety for fear we should be stopped; but there was no one on the bank, and though the

towers of St. Philip and St. James appeared again and again, in lessening size, as we looked back, there came at last a bend in the canal, when a high bank of gorse shut out the distance, and we saw them no more.

In about an hour, having had no breakfast, we began to speak seriously of the pie. (I had observed Fred breaking little corners from the crust with an absent air more than once.) Thinking of the first subdivision under the word "Hardships" in my handbook, I said, "I'm afraid we ought to wait till we are *worse hungry*."

But Fred said, "Oh, no!" And that, out adventure-seeking, it was quite impossible to save and plan and divide your meals exactly, as you could never tell what might turn up. The Captain always said, "Take good luck and bad luck and pot luck as they come!" So Fred assured me, and we resolved to abide by the Captain's rule.

"We may have to weigh out our food with a bullet, like Admiral Bligh, next week," said Fred.

"So we may," said I. And the thought must have given an extra relish to the beefsteak and hard-boiled eggs, for I never tasted anything so good.

Whether the smell of the pie went aft, or whether something else made the bargemaster turn round and come forward, I do not know; but when we were encumbered with open clasp-knives and full mouths, we saw him bearing down upon us, and in a hasty movement of retreat I lost my balance, and went backward with a crash upon a tub of potatoes.

The noise this made was not the worst part of the business. I was tightly wedged amongst the odds and ends, and the money-bag being sharply crushed against the match-box, which was by this time well warmed, the matches exploded in a body, and whilst I was putting as heroic a face as I could on the pain I was enduring in my right funny-bone, Fred cried, "Your jacket's smoking! You're on fire!"

Whether Mr. Rowe, the bargemaster, had learnt presence of mind out of a book, I do not know; but before Fred and I could even think of what to do in the emergency, my jacket was off, the matches were overboard, and Mr. Rowe was squeezing the smouldering fire out of my pocket rather more deliberately than most men brush their hats. Then, after civilly holding the jacket for me to put it on again, he took

off his hat; took his handkerchief out of it and wiped his head, and replacing both, with his eyes upon us, said, more deliberately still, "Well, young gentlemen, this is a nice start!"

It was impossible to resist the feeling of confidence inspired by Mr. Rowe's manner, his shrewd and solid appearance, and his promptness in an emergency. Besides, we were completely at his mercy. We appealed to it, and told him our plans. We offered him a share of the pie too, which he accepted with conscious condescension. When the dish was empty he brought his handkerchief into use once more, and then said, in a peculiarly oracular manner, "You just look to me, young gentlemen, and I'll put you in the way of everythink."

The immediate advantage we took of this offer was to ask about whatever interested us in the landscape constantly passing before our eyes, or the barge-furniture at our feet. The cord-compressed balls were shore-fenders, said Mr. Rowe, and were popped over the side when the barge was likely to grate against the shore, or against another vessel.

"Them's osier-beds. They cuts 'em every year or so for basket-work. Wot's that little

bird a-hanging head downwards? It's a tit-mouse looking for insects, that is. There's scores on 'em in the osier-beds. Aye, aye, the yellow lilies is pretty enough, but there's a lake the other way — a mile or two beyond your father's, Master Fred — where there's white water-lilies. They're pretty, if you like! It's a rum thing in spring," continued Mr. Rowe, between puffs of his pipe, "to see them lilies come up from the bottom of the canal, the leaves packed as neat as any parcel; and when they git to the top, they turns down and spreads out on the water as flat as you could spread a cloth upon a table."

As a rule, Mr. Rowe could give us no names for the aquatic plants at which we clutched as we went by, nor for the shells we got out of the mud; but his eye for a water-rat was like a terrier's. It was the only thing which seemed to excite him.

About mid-day we stopped by a village, where Mr. Rowe had business. The horse was to rest and bait here; and the barge-master told us that if we had "a shilling or so about" us, we might dine on excellent bread and cheese at the *White Lion*, or even

go so far as poached eggs and yet more excellent bacon, if our resources allowed of it. We were not sorry to go ashore. There was absolutely no shelter on the deck of the barge from the sunshine, which was glaringly reflected by the water. The inn parlor was low, but it was dark and cool. I felt doubtful about the luxury even of cheese after that beefsteak pie; but Fred smacked his lips and ordered eggs and bacon, and I paid for them out of the canvas-bag.

As we sat together I said, "I wrote a letter to my mother, Fred. Did you write to Mrs. Johnson?"

Fred nodded, and pulled a scrap of dirty paper from his pocket, saying, "That's the letter; but I made a tidy copy of it afterwards."

I have said that Fred was below me in class, though he is older; and he was very bad at spelling. Otherwise the letter did very well, except for smudges.

DEAR MOTHER,

Charlie and I are going to run away at least by the time you get this we have run away but never mind for wen weve seen the wurld were cumming back we took the pi wich I hope you won't mind as we had no brekfust and I'll bring back the dish we send our best

love and I've no more to tell you to-day from your affectionate son FRED.

I saw Mr. Rowe, myself, very busy in the bar of the *White Lion*, with a sheet of paper and an old steel pen, which looked as if the point had been attenuated to that hair-like fineness by sheer age. He started at the sight of me, which caused him to drop a very large blot of ink from the very sharp point of the pen on to his paper. I left him wiping it up with his handkerchief. But it never struck me that he was writing a letter on the same subject as Fred and I had been writing about. He was, however, and Mr. Johnson keeps it tied up with Fred's to this day. The spelling was of about the same order.

"MR. JOHNSON. HONERD SIR.

i rites in duty bound to acqaint you that the young genlemen is with me, looking out for Advenchurs and asking your pardon i wish they may find them as innercent as 2 Babes in the Wood on the London and Lancingford Canal were they come aboard quite unknown to me and blowed theirselves up with lucifers the fust go off and youve no need to trubble yourself sir ill keep my I on them and bring em safe to hand with return cargo and hoping you'll excuse the stamp not expecting to have to rite from the fust stoppige your obedient humble servant.

SAMUEL ROWE."

As I have said, we did not suspect that Mr. Rowe had betrayed us by post; but in the course of the afternoon Fred said to me, "I'll tell you what, Charlie, I know old Rowe well, and he's up to any trick, and sure to want to keep in with my father. If we don't take care, he'll take us back with him. And what fools we shall look then!"

The idea was intolerable; but I warned Fred to carefully avoid betraying that we suspected him. The Captain had had worse enemies to outwit, and had kept a pirate in good humor for a much longer voyage by affability and rum. We had no means of clouding Mr. Rowe's particularly sharp wits with grog, but we resolved to be amiable and wary, and when we did get to London to look out for the first opportunity of giving the bargemaster the slip.

CHAPTER IX.

A COASTING VOYAGE. — MUSK ISLAND. — LINNET FLASH. — MR. ROWE AN OLD TAR. — THE DOG-FANCIER AT HOME.

It was a delightful feature of our first voyage — and one which we could not hope to enjoy so often in voyages to come — that we were always close to land, and this on both sides. We could touch either coast without difficulty, and as the barge stopped several times during the day to rest the horse, Fred and I had more than one chance of going ashore.

I hope to have many a voyage yet, and to see stranger people and places than I saw then, but I hardly hope ever to enjoy myself so much again. I have long ago found out that Fred's stories of the Captain's adventures were not true stories, and as I have read and learned more about the world than I knew

at that time, I know now that there are only certain things which one can meet with by land or by sea. But when Fred and I made our first voyage, in emulation of his grandfather, there was no limit to my expectations, or to what we were prepared to see or experience at every fresh bend of the London and Lancingford Canal.

I remember one of Fred's stories about the Captain was of his spending a year and a day on an island called Musk Island, in the Pacific. He had left the ship, Fred said, to do a little exploring alone in his gig. Not knowing at that time that the captain's gig is a boat, I was a good deal puzzled, I remember, to think of Mrs. Johnson's red-faced father crossing the sea in a gig like the one Mr. Bustard used to go his professional "rounds" in. And when Fred spoke of his "pulling himself," I was yet more bewildered by the unavoidable conclusion that they had no horse on board, and that the gallant and ever-ready Captain went himself between the shafts. The wonder of his getting to Musk Island in that fashion was, however, eclipsed by the wonders he found when he did get there. Musk-hedges and bowers

ten feet high, with flowers as large as bind-weed blossoms, and ladies with pale gold hair, all dressed in straw-colored satin, and with such lovely faces that the Captain vowed that no power on earth should move him till he had learned enough of the language to propose the health of the Musk Island beauties in a suitable speech after dinner. "And there he would have lived and died, I believe," Fred would say, "if that first mate, who saved his life before, had not rescued him by main force, and taken him back to his ship."

I am reminded of this story when I think of the island in Linnet Lake, for we were so deeply charmed by it that we very nearly broke our voyage, as the Captain broke his, to settle on it.

Mr. Rowe called the lake Linnet Flash. Wherever the canal seemed to spread out, and then go on again narrow and like a river, the bargemaster called these lakes "flashes" of the canal. There is no other flash on that canal so large or so beautiful as Linnet Lake, and in the middle of the lake lies the island.

It was about three o'clock, the hottest part of a summer's day, and Fred and I, rather

faint with the heat, were sitting on a coil of rope holding a clean sheet, which Mr. Rowe had brought up from the cabin to protect our heads and backs from sunstroke. We had refused to take shelter below, and sat watching the fields and hedges, which seemed to palpitate in the heat as they went giddily by, and Mr. Rowe, who stood quite steady, conversing coolly with the driver. The driver had been on board for the last hour, the way being clear, and the old horse quite able to take care of itself and us, and he and the bargemaster had pocket-handkerchiefs under their hats like the sou'wester flaps of the Captain's sea-friends. Fred had dropped his end of the sheet to fall asleep, and I was protecting us both, when the driver bawled some directions to the horse in their common language, and the bargemaster said, "Here's a bit of shade for you, Master Fred;" and we roused up and found ourselves gliding under the lee of an island covered with trees.

"Oh, *do* stop here!" we both cried.

"Well, I don't mind," said Mr. Rowe, removing his hat, and mopping himself with his very useful pocket-handkerchief. "Jem,

there's a bit of grass there; let her have a mouthful."

"I thought you'd like this," he continued; "there ain't a prettier bit between here and Pyebridge."

It was so lovely that the same idea seized both Fred and me: Why not settle here, at least for a time? It was an uninhabited island, only waiting to be claimed by some adventurous navigator, and obviously fertile. The prospect of blackberries on the mainland was particularly fine, and how they would ripen in this blazing sun! Birds sang in the trees above; fish leaping after flies broke the still surface of the water with a musical splash below; and beyond a doubt there must be the largest and sweetest of earth-nuts on the island, easy to get out of the deep beds of untouched leaf-mould. And when Mr. Rowe cried, "Look!" and we saw a water-fowl scud across the lake, leaving a sharp trail like a line of light behind her, we felt that we might spend all our savings in getting to the Pacific Ocean, and not find when we got there a place which offered more natural resources to the desert islander.

If the bargemaster would have gone ashore

on the mainland, out of the way, and if we could have got ashore on the island without help, we should not have confided our plans to so doubtful a friend. As it was, we were obliged to tell Mr. Rowe that we proposed to found a settlement in Linnet Lake, and he was completely opposed to the idea.

It was only when he said, — with that air of reserved and funded knowledge which gave such unfathomable depth to his irony, and made his sayings so oracular, — "There's very different places in the world to Linnet Flash," that we began to be ashamed of our hasty enthusiasm, and to think that it would be a pity to stop so short in our adventurous career.

So we decided to go on; but the masterly way in which Mr. Rowe spoke of the world made me think he must have seen a good deal of it, and when we had looked our last upon the island, and had crept with lowered mast under an old brick bridge where young ferns hung down from the archway, and when we were once more travelling between flat banks and coppices that gave us no shelter, I said to the bargemaster, "Have you ever been at sea, Mr. Rowe?"

"Seven*teen* year in the Royal Navy," said Mr. Rowe, with a strong emphasis upon *teen*, as if he feared we might do him the injustice of thinking he had only served his queen and country for seven.

For the next two hours Fred and I sat, indifferent alike to the sunshine and the shore, in rapt attention to Mr. Rowe's narrative of his experiences at sea under the flag that has

"Braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze."

I believe Fred enjoyed them simply as stories, but they fanned in my heart that restless fever for which sea-breezes are the only cure. I think Mr. Rowe got excited himself as he recalled old times. And when he began to bawl sea-songs with a voice like an Atlantic gale, and when he vowed in cadence

"A sailor's life is the life for me,"

I felt that it was the life for me also, and expressed myself so strongly to that effect that Mr. Rowe became alarmed for the consequences of his indiscretion, and thenceforward told us sea-stories with the obvious and quite futile

intention of disgusting me with what I already looked upon as my profession.

But the bargemaster's rapid change of tactics convinced me more and more that we could not safely rely on him to help us in our plans.

About five o'clock, he made tea on board, and boiled the water on the little stove in the cabin. I was very anxious to help, and it was I who literally made the tea, whilst Mr. Rowe's steadier hand cut thick slices of bread and butter from a large loaf. There was only one cup and saucer. Fred and I shared the cup, and the bargemaster took the saucer. By preference, he said, as the tea cooled quicker.

The driver had tea after we returned to the deck and could attend to the horse and boat.

Except the island in Linnet Lake, the most entertaining events of the first day of our voyage were our passing villages or detached houses on the canal-banks.

Of the latter by far the most interesting was that of a dog-fancier, from whose residence melodious howls, in the dog dialect of every tribe deserving to be represented in so choice a company, were wafted up the stream, and met our ears before our eyes beheld the landing-stage

of the establishment, where the dog-fancier and some of his dogs were lounging in the cool of the evening, and glad to see the barge.

The fancier knew Mr. Rowe, and refreshed him, and us, with shandygaff in horn tumblers. Some of the dogs who did not, barked incessantly at us, wagging their tails at the same

time, however, as if they had some doubts of the correctness of their judgment in the matter. One very small, very white, and very fluffy toy dog, with a dove-colored ribbon, was, no doubt, incurably ill-tempered and inhospitable; but a large brindled bull-dog, trying politely but vainly to hide his teeth and tongue, wagged

what the fancier had left him of a tail, and dribbled with the pleasure of making our acquaintance, after the wont of his benevolent and much-maligned family. I have since felt pretty certain that Mr. Rowe gave his friend a sketch of our prospects and intentions in the same spirit in which he had written to Mr. Johnson, and I distinctly overheard the dog-fancier make some reply, in which the words "hoffer a reward" were audible. But the bargemaster shook his head at suggestions probably drawn from his friend's professional tradition, though the fancier told him some very good story about the ill-tempered toy dog, to which he referred with such violent jerks of the head as threatened to throw his fur cap on to that of the brindled gentleman who sat dripping and smiling at his feet.

When Mr. Rowe began to tell him something good in return, and in spite of my utmost endeavors not to hear anything, the words "Linnet Flash" became audible, I blushed to hear the fancier choking over his shandygaff, with laughter, I feared, at our project for settling on the island.

The interview was now at an end, but as

Mr. Rowe stepped briskly on board, the fur cap nodded to the forehatch, where Fred and I were sitting on coiled ropes, and the fancier said very knowingly, "The better the breed, the gamier the beast."

He patted the bulldog as he said it, and the bulldog kissed his dirty hand.

"Hup to hanythink," were Mr. Rowe's parting words, as we went aft and the driver called to his horse.

He may have referred to the bulldog, but I had some doubts about it, even then.

CHAPTER X.

LOCKS. — WE THINK OF GOING ON THE TRAMP. — PYEBRIDGE. — WE SET SAIL.

During our first day's voyage we passed two locks. There was one not very far from home, and Fred and I had more than once been to see a barge pass it, sitting on the bank whilst the boat gradually sank to the level of the water below.

It was great fun being on board whilst the barge went down and down, though I must say we did not feel anything peculiar, we sank so gradually.

"Just fancy if it was a hole in the ship's bottom," said Fred, "and we were settling down with all on board. Some ships do, and are never heard of again."

We amused ourselves as we went along by guessing beforehand on which shore the next house or hamlet would appear. We betted shillings on the result, but neither of us won

or lost, for however often the shillings changed hands, they remained in the canvas bag.

Perhaps places look more as if events happened in them if you do not know them well. I noticed that even our town looked more interesting from the water than I had ever seen it look, so I dare say to strangers it does not appear so dull as it is. All the villages on the canal-banks looked interesting. We passed one soon after tea, where the horse rested under some old willows by the towing-path, and we and Mr. Rowe went ashore. Whilst the bargemaster delivered a parcel to a friend, Fred and I strolled into a lane which led us past cottages with very gay gardens, to the church. The church was not at all like St. Philip or St. James. It was squat and ivy-covered, and carefully restored; and it stood in a garden where the flowers almost hid the graves. Just outside the lych-gate, four lanes met, and all of them were so shady and inviting, and it was so impossible to say what they might not lead to, that I said to Fred:

"You said the only way to run away besides going to sea was to *tramp*. It sounds rather low, but we needn't beg, and I think walking

would be nice for a change, and I don't believe it would be much slower than the barge, and it would be so much shadier; and we could get off from old Rowe at once, and hide if we heard anybody coming. I wonder how far it is to London now?"

"Not far, I dare say," said Fred, who was pleased by the idea, "and if we keep on we must get there in time. And we can get things to eat in the hedges, which we can't do on the barge."

At this moment there passed a boy, to whom I said, "Which is the way to London, if you please?" for there were four roads to choose from.

"What d'say?" said the boy.

I repeated my question.

"Dunno," he replied, trying to cram half his hand into his mouth. The Captain would have thought him very stupid if he had met him as a native in one of the islands of the Pacific, I am sure; but I followed him, and begged him to try and think if he had not heard of people going to London.

At last his face brightened. He was looking over my head down the lane. "There's a man

a-cummin' yonder's always a-going to Lunnon," said he. Visions of a companion on our tramp, also perhaps in search of adventures, made me look briskly around. "Him with the pipe, as b'longs to the barge," the boy explained.

It was indeed Mr. Rowe, come to look for us, and we had to try and seem glad to see him, and to go on board once more.

Towards evening the canal-banks became dotted with fishers of all ages and degrees, fishing very patiently, though they did not seem to catch much.

Soon after dark we reached the town of Pyebridge.

When the barge lay to for the night, and the driver was taking the horse away to a stable, Mr. Rowe confronted us, in his firmest manner, with the question, "And where are you going to sleep, young gentlemen?"

"Where are *you* going to sleep, Mr. Rowe?" said I, after a thoughtful pause.

"*I* sleeps below, but the captain's cabin is guv up to no one — unless it be the Queen," replied the bargemaster, humorously but decidedly.

"We should like to sleep on deck," said I.

But Mr. Rowe would not hear of it, on

account of various dreadful diseases which he assured us would be contracted by sleeping "in the damps of the water," "the dews of the *h*air," and "the rays of the moon."

"There's a hotel — " he began; but I said at once, "We couldn't afford a hotel; but if you know of any very cheap place, we should be much obliged."

Mr. Rowe took off his hat and took out his handkerchief, though it was no longer hot. Having cleared his brain, he said he "would see," and he finally led us along one of the pebbled streets of Pyebridge to a small house, with a small shop window for the sale of vegetables, and with a card announcing that there were beds to let. A very little old woman got up from behind a very big old geranium in the window as we entered, and with her Mr. Rowe made our arrangements for the night. We got a clean bed, and had a mug of milk and a slice of bread and treacle apiece for breakfast the next morning, and I paid two shillings. As I thanked the old lady and bade her good day, she called to me to hold out my hat, which she filled with cherries, and then stood at the door and watched us out of sight.

There was a railway station in Pyebridge, and we might easily have escaped from Mr. Rowe, and gone by train to London. But besides the fact that our funds were becoming low, the water had a new attraction for us. We had left the canal behind, and were henceforward on a river. If the wind favored us, we were to sail.

"A canal's nothing to a river," said Mr. Rowe, "same as a river's nothing to the sea," and when Fred had some difficulty in keeping his hat on, in the gusty street (mine was in use as a fruit-basket), and the bargemaster said it was a "nice fresh morning," I felt that life on Linnet Island would have been tame indeed compared to the hopes and fears of a career which depended on the winds and waves.

And when the boom went up the barge's mast, and the tightly corded roll of dark canvas began to struggle for liberty, and writhe and flap with throttling noises above our heads; and when Mr. Rowe wrestled with it, and the driver helped him, and Fred and I tried to, and were all but swept overboard in consequence, whilst the bargemaster encouraged himself by strange

and savage sounds; and when the sunshine caught our nut-brown sail, just as she spread gallantly to the breeze, our excitement grew till we both cried in one breath:

"This is something *like* being at sea!"

CHAPTER XI.

MR. ROWE ON BARGE—WOMEN. — THE RIVER. — NINE ELMS. — A MYSTERIOUS NOISE. — ROUGH QUARTERS. — A CHEAP SUPPER. — JOHN'S BERTH. — WE MAKE OUR ESCAPE. — OUT INTO THE WORLD.

Mr. Rowe is quite right. A canal is nothing to a river.

There was a wide piece of water between us and one of the banks now, and other barges went by us, some sailing, some towing only, and two or three with women at the rudder, and children on the deck.

"I wouldn't have *my* wife and fam'ly on board for something!" said Mr. Rowe grimly.

"Have you got a family, Mr. Rowe?" I inquired.

"Yes, sir," said the bargemaster. "I have, like other folk. But women and children's best ashore."

"Of course they are," said I.

"If you was to turn over in your mind what they *might* be good for, now," he continued, with an unfathomable eye on the mistress of a passing canal-boat, "you'd say washing the decks and keeping the pots clean. And they don't do it as well as a man, — not by half."

"They seem to steer pretty well," said I.

"I've served in very different vessels to what I'm in now," said Mr. Rowe, avoiding a reply, "and I *may* come as low as a monkey-barge and coal; but I'm blessed if ever I see myself walk on the towing-path and leave the missus in command on board."

At this moment a barge came sailing alongside of us.

"Oh, look!" cried Fred; "it's got a white horse painted on the sail."

"That's a lime-barge, sir," said Mr. Rowe; "all lime-barges is marked that way."

She was homeward bound, and empty, and soon passed us; but we went at a pretty good pace ourselves. The wind kept favorable, a matter in which Fred and I took the deepest interest. We licked our fingers, and held them up to see which side got cooled by the breeze,

and whenever this experiment convinced me that it was still behind us, I could not help running back to Fred to say with triumph, "The wind's dead aft," as if he knew nothing about it.

At last this seemed to annoy him, so I went to contain myself by sitting on the potato-tub and watching the shore.

We got into the Thames earlier than usual, thanks to the fair wind.

The world is certainly a very beautiful place. I suppose when I get right out into it, and go to sea, and to other countries, I shall think nothing of England and the Thames, but it was all new and wonderful to Fred and me then. The green slopes and fine trees, and the houses with gardens down to the river, and boats rocking by the steps, the osier islands, which Mr. Rowe called "aits," and the bridges where the mast had to be lowered; all the craft on the water, — the red-sailed barges with one man on board, the steamers with crowded decks and gay awnings, the schooners, yachts, and pleasure-boats; and all the people on shore, — the fishers, and the people with water-dogs and sticks, the ladies with fine dresses and parasols,

and the ragged boys who cheered us as we went by; everything we saw and heard delighted us, and the only sore place in my heart was where I longed for Rupert and Henrietta to enjoy it too.

Later on we saw London. It was in the moonlight that we passed Chelsea. Mr. Rowe pointed out the Hospital, in which the pensioners must have been asleep, for not a wooden leg was stirring. In less than half an hour afterwards we were at the end of our voyage.

The first thing which struck me about Nine Elms was that they were not to be seen. I had thought of those elms more than once under the burning sun of the first day. I had imagined that we should land at last on some green bank, where the shelter of a majestic grove might tempt Mr. Rowe to sleep, while Fred and I should steal gently away to the neighboring city, and begin a quite independent search for adventures. But I think I must have mixed up with my expectations a story of one of the Captain's escapes, — from a savage chief in a mango-grove.

Our journey's end was not quite what I had thought it would be, but it was novel and

interesting enough. We seemed to have thoroughly got to the town. Very old houses, with feeble lights in their paper-patched windows, made strange reflections on the river. The pier looked dark and dirty even by moonlight, and threw blacker and stranger shadows still.

Mr. Rowe was busy, and tired, and, we thought, a little inclined to be cross.

"I wonder where we shall sleep?" said Fred, looking timidly up at the dark old houses.

I have said before that I find it hard work to be very brave after dark, but I put a good face on the matter, and said I dared say old Rowe would find us a cheap bedroom.

"London's an awful place for robbers and murders, you know," said Fred.

I was hoping the cold shiver running down my back was due to what the bargemaster called "the damps from the water," when a wail like the cry of a hurt child made my skin stiffen into goose-prickles. A wilder moan succeeded, and then one of the windows of one of the dark houses was opened, and something thrown out, which fell heavily down. Mr. Rowe was just coming on board again, and

I found courage in the emergency to gasp out, "What was that?"

"Wot's wot?" said Mr. Rowe testily.

"That noise and the falling thing."

"Somebody throwing somethin' at a cat," said the bargemaster. "Stand aside, sir, *if* you please."

It was a relief, but when at length Mr. Rowe came up to me with his cap off, in the act of taking out his handkerchief, and said, "I suppose you're no richer than you was yesterday, young gentlemen, — how about a bed?" I said, "No — o. That is, I mean, if you can get us a cheap one in a safe — I mean a respectable place —"

"If you leaves a comfortable 'ome, sir," moralized the bargemaster, "to go a-looking for adventures in this fashion, you must put up with rough quarters, and wot you can get."

"We'll go anywhere you think right, Mr. Rowe," said I diplomatically.

"I knows a waterman," said Mr. Rowe, "that was in the Royal Navy like myself. He lives near here, and they're decent folk. The place is a poor place, but you'll have to make the best of it, young gentlemen, and a

shilling 'll cover the damage. If you wants supper, you must pay for it. Give the missis the money, and she'll do the best she can, and bring you the change to a half-farthing."

My courage was now fully restored, but Fred was very much overwhelmed by the roughness of the streets we passed through, the drunken, quarrelling, poverty-struck people, and the grim, dirty old houses.

"We shall be out of it directly," I whispered, and indeed in a few minutes more Mr. Rowe turned up a shabby entry, and led us to one of several lower buildings round a small court. The house he stopped at was cleaner within than without, and the woman was very civil.

"It's a very poor place, sir," said she, "but we always keep a berth, as his father calls it, for our son John."

"But we can't take your son's bed," said I; "we'll sit up here, if you will let us."

"Bless ye, love," said the woman, "John's in foreign parts. He's a sailor, sir, like his father before him; but John's in the merchant service."

Mr. Rowe now bade us good-night. "I'll be round in the morning," said he.

"What o'clock, Mr. Rowe?" I asked; I had a reason for asking.

"There ain't much in the way of return cargo," he replied; "but I've a bit of business to do for your father, Mr. Fred, that'll take me until half-past nine. I'll be here by then, young gentlemen, and show you about a bit."

"It's roughish quarters for you," added the bargemaster, looking around, "but you'll find rougher quarters at sea, Master Charles."

Mr. Rowe's moralizings nettled me, and they did no good, for my whole thoughts were now bent on evading his guardianship and getting to sea, but poor Fred was quite overpowered. "I wish we were safe home again," he almost sobbed when I went up to the corner into which he had huddled himself.

"You'll be all right when we're afloat," said I.

"I'm so hungry," he moaned.

I was hungry myself, and decided to order some supper, so when the woman came up and civilly asked if she could do anything for us before we went to bed, I said, "If you please, we're rather hungry, but we can't afford anything very expensive. Do you think you

can get us anything — rather cheap — for supper?"

"A red herring," she suggested.

"What price are they?" I felt bound to inquire.

"Mrs. Jones has them beautiful and mild at

two for a penny. You *can* get 'em at three a penny, but you wouldn't like 'em, sir."

I felt convinced by the expression of her face that I should not, so I ordered two.

"And a penny loaf?" suggested our landlady, getting her bonnet from behind the door.

"If you please."

"And a bunch of radishes and a pint of fourpenny would be fivepence-halfpenny the lot, sir."

"If you please. And, if you please, that will do," said I, drawing a shilling from the bag, for the thought of the herrings made me ravenous, and I wanted her to go. She returned quickly with the bread and herrings. The "fourpenny" proved to be beer. She gave me sixpence-halfpenny in change, which puzzled my calculations.

"You said *fourpenny*," said I, indicating the beer.

"Yes, sir, but it's a pint," was the reply; and it was only when, in after years, I learned that beer at fourpence a quart is known to some people as "fourpenny," that I got that part of the reckoning of the canvas bag straight in my own mind.

The room had an unwholesome smell about it, which the odor from our fried herrings soon pleasantly overpowered. The bread was good, and the beer did us no harm. Fred picked up his spirits again, and when Mr. Rowe's old mate came home, he found us very cheerful and

chatty. Fred asked him about the son who was at sea, but I had some more important questions to put, and I managed so to do, and with a sufficiently careless air.

"I suppose there are lots of ships at London?" said I.

"In the docks, sir, plenty," said our host.

"And where are the docks?" I inquired. "Are they far from you?"

"Well, you see, sir, there's a many docks. There's the East India Docks, St. Katherine's Docks, and the Commercial Docks, and Victoria Docks, and lots more."

I pondered. Ships in the East India Dock probably went only to India. St. Katherine conveyed nothing to my mind. I did not fancy Commercial Docks. I felt a loyal inclination towards the Victoria Dock.

"How do people get from here to Victoria Dock now, if they want to?" I asked.

"Well, of course, sir, you can go down the river, or part that way, and then by rail from Fenchurch Street."

"Where is Fenchurch Street, Mr. Smith?" said I, becoming a good deal ashamed of my pertinacity.

"In the city, sir," said Mr. Smith.

The city! Now, I never heard of any one in any story going out into the world to seek his fortune, and coming to a city, who did not go into it to see what was to be seen. Leaving the king's only daughter and those kind of things, which belong to story-books, out of the question, I do not believe the Captain would have passed a new city without looking into it.

"You go down the river to Fenchurch Street — in a barge?" I suggested.

"Bless ye, no, sir!" said Mr. Smith, getting the smoke of his pipe down his throat the wrong way with laughing, till I thought his coughing fit would never allow him to give me the important information I required. "There's boats, sir, plenty on 'em, — I could take you myself, and be thankful, — and there's steamers calls at the wharf every quarter of an hour or so through the day, from nine in the morning, and takes you to London Bridge for threepence. It ain't many minutes' walk to Fenchurch Street, and the train takes you straight to the Docks."

After this we conversed on general seafaring

matters. Mr. Smith was not a very able-bodied man, in consequence of many years' service in unhealthy climates, he said; and he complained of his trade as a "poor one," and very different from what it had been in his father's time, and before new London Bridge was built, which "anybody and anything could get through" now, without watermen's assistance. In his present depressed condition he seemed to look back on his seafaring days with pride and tender regret, and when we asked for tales of his adventures he was checked by none of the scruples which withheld Mr. Rowe from encouraging me to be a sailor.

"John's berth" proved to be a truckle-bed in a closet which just held it, and which also held more nasty smells than I could have believed there was room for. Opening the window seemed only to let in fresh ones. When Fred threw himself on his face on the bed, and said, "What a beastly hole!" and cried bitterly, I was afraid he was going to be ill; and when I had said my prayers and persuaded him to say his and come to bed, I thought that if we got safely through the night we would make the return voyage with Mr. Rowe, and for the

future leave events and emergencies to those who liked danger and discomfort.

But when we woke with the sun shining on our faces, and through the little window beheld it sparkling on the river below us, and on the distant city, we felt all right again, and stuck to our plans.

"Let's go by the city," said Fred; "I should like to see some of the town."

"If we don't get off before half past nine, we're lost," said I.

We found an unexpected clog in Mr. Smith, who seemed inclined to stick to us and repeat the stories he had told us overnight. At about half past eight, however, he went off to his boat, saying he supposed we should wait for Mr. Rowe; and when his wife went into a neighbor's house, I laid a shilling on the table, and we slipped out and made our way to the pier.

Mr. Rowe was not there, and a church clock near struck nine. This was echoed from the city more than once, and then we began to look anxiously for the steamer. Five, ten minutes must have passed — they seemed hours to me — when I asked a man who was waiting also,

when the steamer for London Bridge would come.

"She'll be here soon," said he.

"So will old Rowe," whispered Fred.

But the steamer came first, and we went on board, and the paddles began to splash, and our escape was accomplished.

It was a lovely morning, and the tall, dirty old houses looked almost grand in the sunlight as we left Nine Elms. The distant city came nearer and shone brighter, and when the fretted front of the Houses of Parliament went by us like a fairy palace, and towers and blocks of buildings rose solidly one behind another in shining tints of white and gray against the blue summer sky, and when above the noise of our paddle-wheels came the distant roar of the busy streets, Fred pressed the arm I had pushed through his and said, "We're out in the world at last!"

CHAPTER XII.

EMERGENCIES AND POLICEMEN. — FENCHURCH STREET STATION.— THIRD CLASS TO CUSTOM HOUSE.— A SHIP FOREST.

Policemen are very useful people. I do not know how we should have got from the London Bridge pier to the Fenchurch Street Station if it had not been that Fred told me he knew one could ask policemen the way to places. There is nothing to pay, which I was very glad of, as the canvas bag was getting empty.

Once or twice they helped us through emergencies. We had to go from one footpath to another, straight across the street, and the street was so full of carts and cabs and drays and omnibuses, that one could see that it was quite an impossibility. We did it, however, for the policeman made us. I said, "Hadn't we better wait till the crowd has gone?" But the policeman laughed, and said then we had better

take lodgings close by and wait at the window. So we did it. Fred said the Captain once ran in a little cutter between two big ships that were firing into him, but I do not think that can have been much worse than running between a backing dray full of rolling barrels, and a hansom cab pulled up and ramping like a rocking-horse at the lowest point of the rockers.

When we were safely on the other pavement, we thanked the policeman very much, and then went on, asking our way till we got to Fenchurch Street.

If anything could smell nastier than Johns' berth in Nine Elms, it is Fenchurch Street Station. And I think it is worse in this way: John's berth smelt horribly, but it was warm and weather-tight; you never swallow a drop of pure air in Fenchurch Street Station, and yet you cannot find a corner in which you can get out of the draughts.

With one gale blowing on my right from an open door, and another gale blowing on my left down some steps, and nasty smells blowing from every point of the compass, I stood at a dirty little hole in a dirty wooden wall and took our

tickets. I had to stand on tiptoe to make the young man see me.

"What is the cheapest kind of tickets you have, if you please?" I inquired, with the canvas bag in my hand.

"Third class," said the young man, staring very hard at me, which I thought rather rude. "Except working men's tickets, and they're not for this train."

"Two third-class tickets for Victoria Dock, then, if you please," said I.

"Single or return?" said he.

"I beg your pardon?" I said, for I was puzzled.

"Are you coming back to-day?" he inquired.

"Oh, dear, no!" said I, for some of the Captain's voyages had lasted for years; but the question made me anxious, as I knew nothing of railway rules, and I added, "Does it matter?"

"Not by no means," replied the young man smartly, and he began to whistle, but stopped himself to ask, "Custom House or Tidal Basin?"

I had no alternative but to repeat, "I *beg* your pardon?"

He put his face right through the hole and

looked at me. "Will you take your tickets for Custom House or Tidal Basin?" he repeated. "Either will do for Victoria Docks."

"Then, whichever you please," said I as politely as I could.

The young man took out two tickets and snapped them impatiently in something, and as a fat woman was squeezing me from behind, I was glad to take what I could get and go back to Fred.

He was taking care of our two bundles and the empty pie-dish.

That pie-dish was a good deal in our way. Fred wanted to get rid of it, and said he was sure his mother would not want us to be bothered with it; but Fred had promised in his letter to bring it back, and he could not break his word. I told him so, but I said as he did not like to be seen with it I would carry it. So I did.

With a strong breeze aft, we were driven upstairs in the teeth of a gale, and ran before a high wind down a platform where, after annoying one of the railway men very much by not being able to guess which was the train and having to ask him, we got in among a lot of

rough-looking people, who were very civil and kind. A man with a black face and a white jacket said he would tell us when we got to Custom House, and he gave me his seat by the window, that I might look out.

What struck me as rather odd was that everybody in the third-class carriage seemed to have bundles like ours, and yet they couldn't all be running away. One thin woman with a very troublesome baby had three. Perhaps it is because portmanteaus and things of that sort are rather expensive.

Fred was opposite to me. It was a bright, sunny morning, a fresh breeze blew, and in the sunlight the backs of endless rows of shabby houses looked more cheerful than usual, though very few of the gardens had anything in them but dirt and cats, and very many of the windows had the week's wash hanging out on strings and poles. The villages we had passed on the canal-banks all looked pretty and interesting, but I think that most of the places we saw out of the window of the train would look very ugly on a dull day.

I fancy there were poplar-trees at a place called Poplar, and I thought it must be called

after them; but Fred says, No, and we have never been there since, so I cannot be sure about it. If not, I must have dreamed it.

I did fall asleep in the corner, I know; I was so very much tired, and we had had no breakfast, and I sat on the side where the wind blows in, which I think helped to make me sleepy. I was wakened partly by the pie-dish slipping off my lap, and partly by Fred saying in an eager tone:

"Oh, Charlie! Look! *Are they all ships?*"

We stuffed our heads through the window, and my hat was nearly blown away, so the man with the black face and the white jacket gave it to the woman with the troublesome baby to take care of for me, and he held us by our legs for fear we should fall out.

On we flew! There was wind enough in our faces to have filled the barge sail three times over, and Fred licked his lips and said, "I do believe there's salt in it!"

But what he woke me up to show me drove me nearly wild. When I had seen a couple of big barges lying together, with their two bare masts leaning towards each other, I used to think how dignified and beautiful they

looked. But here were hundreds of masts, standing as thick as tree-trunks in a fir-wood; and they were not bare poles, but lofty and slender, and crossed by innumerable yards, and covered with ropes in orderly profusion, which showed in the sunshine as cobwebs shine out in a field in summer. Gay flags and pennons fluttered in the wind; brown sails, gray sails, and gleaming white sails went up and down; and behind it all the water sparkled and dazzled our eyes like the glittering reflections from a mirror moving in the sun.

As we ran nearer the ropes looked thicker, and we could see the devices on the flags. And suddenly, straining his eyes at the yards of a vessel in the thick of the ship-forest, on which was something black, like a spider with only four legs, Fred cried, "It's a sailor!"

I saw him quite well. And seeing him higher up than on any tree one could ever climb, with the sunny sky above him and the shining water below him, I could only mutter out with envious longing, "How happy he must be!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A DIRTY STREET. — A BAD BOY. — SHIPPING AND MERCHANDISE. — WE STOW AWAY ON BOARD THE "ATALANTA." — A SALT TEAR.

The man in the white jacket helped us out, smiling as he did so, so that his teeth shone like ivory in his black face. We took the pie-dish and our bundles, and thanked him very much, and the train went on and took him with it, which we felt sorry for. For when one *is* out in the world, you know, one sometimes feels rather lonely, and sorry to part with a kind friend.

Everybody else went through a little gate into the street, so we did the same. It was a very dirty street, with houses on one side and the railway on the other. There were cabbages and carrots, and old shoes and fishes' heads, and oyster-shells and potato-peelings in the street, and a goat was routing among it

all with its nose, as if it had lost something and hoped to find it by and by.

Places like this always seemed to depress Fred's courage. Besides which, he was never in good spirits when he had to go long without food, which made me fear he would not bear being cast adrift at sea without provisions as well as his grandfather had done. I was not surprised when he said:

"*What* a place! And I don't believe one can get anything fit to eat, and I am so hungry!"

I looked at the houses. There was a pork-butcher's shop, and a real butcher's shop, and a slop shop, and a seedy jeweller's shop with second-hand watches, which looked as if nothing would ever make them go, and a small toy and sweetmeat shop, but not a place that looked like breakfast. I had taken Fred's bundle because he was so tired, and I suppose it was because I was staring helplessly about that a dirty boy, a good deal bigger than either of us, came up and pulled his dirty hair and said:

"Carry your things for you, sir?"

"No, thank you," said I, moving on with

the bundles and the pie-dish; but as the boy would walk by me, I said:

"We want some breakfast very much, but we haven't much money." And, remembering the cost of our supper, I added, "Could we

get anything here for about twopence-halfpenny or threepence apiece?"

There was a moment's pause, and then the boy gave a long whistle.

"Vy, I thought you wos swells!" said he.

I really do not know whether it was because I did not like to be supposed to be a poor person, when it came to the point; or whether it

was because of that bad habit of mine of which even Weston's ballad has not quite cured me,— of being ready to tell people more about my affairs than it can be interesting for them to hear or discreet for me to communicate, — but I replied at once, "We are gentlemen, but we are going in search of adventures, and we don't want to spend more money than we can help till we see what we may want it for when we get to foreign countries."

"You're going to sea, then, hare you?" said the boy, keeping up with us.

"Yes," said I; "but could you tell us where to get something to eat before we go?"

"There's a shop I knows on," said our new friend, "where they sells prime pudding at a penny a slice. The plums go all through and no mistake. Three slices would be threepence: one for you, one for him, and one for my trouble in showing you the way. Threepence more's a quart of stout, and we drink fair by turns. Shall I take your purse and pay it for you? They might cheat a stranger."

"No, thank you," said I, "but we should like some pudding, if you will show us the way."

The slices were small, but then they were

very heavy. We had two each. I rejected the notion of porter, and Fred said he was not thirsty; but I turned back again into the shop to ask for a glass of water for myself. The woman gave it me very civilly, looking, as she did so, with a puzzled manner first at me and then at my bundles and the pie-dish. As she took back the tumbler she nodded her head towards the dirty boy, who stood in the doorway, and said:

"Is that young chap a companion of yours, my dear?"

"Oh, dear, no," said I; "only he showed us the way here."

"Don't have nothing to do with him," she whispered; "he's a bad un."

In spite of this warning, however, as there was no policeman to be seen, and the boy would keep up with us, I asked him the way to Victoria Dock.

It was not so easy to get to the ships as I had expected. There were gates to pass through, and they were kept by a porter. He let some people in and turned others back.

"Have you got an order to see the docks?" asked the boy.

I confessed that we had not, but added that we wanted very much to get in.

"My eyes!" said the bad boy, doubling himself in a fit of amusement, "I believe you're both going for stowaways!"

"What do you mean by stowaways?" I asked.

"Stowaways is chaps that hides aboard vessels going out of port, to get their passage free gratis for nothing."

"Do a good many manage it?" I asked with an anxious mind.

"There ain't a vessel leaves the docks without one, and sometimes more aboard. The captain never looks that way, not by no accident whatsoever. He don't lift no tarpaulins while the ship's in dock, but when she gets to sea the captain gets his eyesight back, and he takes it out of the stowaways for their wittles then. Oh, yes, rather so!" said the bad boy.

There was a crowd at the gates.

"Hold your bundles down on your right side," said the boy, "and go in quickly after any respectable-looking cove you see."

Fred had got his own bundle now, and we followed our guide's directions, and went through

the gates after an elderly, well-dressed man. The boy seemed to try to follow us, squeezing very close up to me, but the gatekeeper stopped him. When we were on the other side I saw him bend down and wink backwards at the gatekeeper through his straddled legs. Then he stood derisively on his head. After which he went away as a catherine-wheel, and I saw him no more.

We were among the ships at last! Vessels very different from Mr. Rowe's barge, or even the three-penny steamboat. Lofty and vast, with shining decks of marvellous cleanliness, and giant figureheads like dismembered Jins out of some Arabian tale. Streamers of many colors high up in the forest of masts, and seamen of many nations on the decks and wharves below, moved idly in the breeze, which was redolent of many kinds of cargo. Indeed, if the choice of our ship had not been our chief care, the docks and warehouses would have fascinated us little less than the shipping. Here were huge bales of cotton, packed as thickly as bricks in a brick-field; there were wine-casks innumerable; and in another place the air was aromatic with so large a cargo of

coffee that it seemed as if no more could be required in this country for some generations.

It was very entertaining, and Fred was always calling to me to look at something new, but my mind was with the shipping. There was a good deal of anxiety on it, too. The sooner we chose our ship and "stowed away," the better. I hesitated between sailing vessels and steamers. I did not believe that one of the Captain's adventures happened on board any ship that could move faster than it could sail. And yet I was much attracted by some grand-looking steamships. Even their huge funnels had a look of power, I thought, among the masts, like old and hollow oaks in a wood of young and slender trees.

One of these was close in dock, and we could see her well. There were some casks on deck, and by them lay a piece of tarpaulin which caught my eye, and recalled what the bad boy had said about captains and stowaways. Near the gangway were standing two men who did not seem to be sailors. They were respectably dressed, one had a book and a pencil, and they looked, I thought, as if they might have authority to ask our business in the docks, so I drew

Fred back under shelter of some piled-up boxes.

"When does she sail?" asked the man with the book.

"To-morrow morning, sir," replied the other.

And then they crossed the gangway and went into a warehouse opposite.

It was noon, and being the men's dinner-time, the docks were not very busy. At this moment there was not a soul in sight. I grasped Fred's arm, and hoisted the bundle and pie-dish well under my own.

"That's our ship," I said triumphantly; "come along!"

We crossed the gangway unperceived. "The casks!" I whispered, and we made our way to the corner I had noticed. If Fred's heart beat as chokingly as mine did, we were far too much excited to speak, as we settled ourselves into a corner, not quite as cosy as our hiding-place in the forehold of the barge, and drew the tarpaulin over our heads, resting some of the weight of it on the casks behind, that we might not be smothered.

I have waited for the kitchen kettle to boil when Fred and I wanted to make "hot grog"

with raspberry-vinegar and nutmeg at his father's house; I have waited for a bonfire to burn up when we wanted to roast potatoes; I have waited for it to leave off raining when my mother would not let us go out for fear of catching colds; but I never knew time to pass so slowly as when Fred and I were stowaways on board the steamship *Atalanta*.

He was just beginning to complain, when we heard men coming on board. This amused us for a bit, but we were stowed so that we could not see them, and we dared not look out. Neither dared we speak, except when we heard them a good way off, and then we whispered. So, second after second, and minute after minute, and hour after hour went by, and Fred became very restless.

"She's to sail in the morning," I whispered.

"But where are we to get dinner and tea and supper?" asked Fred indignantly. I was tired, and felt cross on my own account.

"You said yourself we might have to weigh out our food with a bullet, like Admiral Bligh, next week."

"He must have had something, or he couldn't have weighed it," retorted Fred; "and how do

we know if they'll ever give us anything to eat on board this ship?"

"I dare say we can buy food at first, till they find us something to do for our meals," said I.

"How much money is there left?" asked Fred.

I put my hand into my pocket for the canvas bag, — but it was gone!

There could be little doubt that the bad boy had picked my pocket at the gate, but I had a sense of guiltiness about it, for most of the money was Fred's. This catastrophe completely overwhelmed him, and he cried and grumbled till I was nearly at my wits' end. I could not stop him, though heavy steps were coming quite close to us.

"Sh! Sh!" muttered I; "if you go on like that they'll certainly find us, and then we shall have managed all this for nothing, and might as well have gone back with old Rowe."

"Which, wind and weather permitting, young gentlemen, you will," said a voice just above us, though we did not hear it.

"I wish we could," sobbed Fred; "only there's no money now. But I'm going to get out of this beastly hole, anyway."

"You're a nice fellow to tell me about your

grandfather," said I, in desperate exasperation; "I don't believe you've the pluck for a common sailor, let alone a great discoverer."

"You've hit the right nail on the head there, Master Charles," said the voice.

"Fiddlesticks about my grandfather!" said Fred.

In the practical experiences of the last three days my faith in Fred's tales had more than once been rather rudely shaken; but the contemptuous tone in which he disposed of our model, the Great Sea-Captain, startled me so severely that I do not think I felt any additional shock of astonishment when strong hands lifted the tarpaulin from our heads, and — grave amid several grinning faces — we saw the bargemaster.

How he reproached us, and how Fred begged him to take us home, and how I besought him to let us go to sea, it would be tedious to relate. I have no doubt now that he never swerved from his intention of taking us back, but he preferred to do it by fair means if possible. So he fubbed me off, and took us round the docks to amuse us, and talked of dinner in a way that went to Fred's heart.

But when I found that we were approaching the gates once more, I stopped dead short. As we went about the docks I had replied to the bargemaster's remarks as well as I could, but I had never ceased thinking of the desire of my heart, and I resolved to make one passionate appeal to his pity.

"Mr. Rowe," I said, in a choking voice, "please don't take me home! I would give anything in the world to go to sea. Why shouldn't I be a sailor, when I want to? Take Fred home if he wants to go, and tell them that I'm all right, and mean to do my duty and come back a credit to them."

Mr. Rowe's face was inscrutable, and I pleaded harder.

"You're an old navy man, you know, Rowe," I said, "and if you recommended me to the captain of one of these ships for a cabin-boy, I'll be bound they'd take me."

"Mr. Charles," said the old man earnestly, "you couldn't go for a cabin-boy; you don't know —"

"You think I can't rough it," I interrupted impatiently, "but try me, and see. I know what I'm after," I added consequentially, "and I'll bear what I have to bear, and do what I'm

set to do, if I can get afloat. I'll be a captain some day, and give orders instead of taking them."

Mr. Rowe drew up to attention and took off his hat. "And wanting an able-bodied seaman in them circumstances, sir, for any voyage you likes to make," said he emphatically, "call for Samuel Rowe." He then wiped the passing enthusiasm from the crown of his head with his handkerchief, and continued, — with the judicious diplomacy for which he was remarkable, — "But of course, sir, it's the Royal Navy you'll begin in, as a midshipman. It's seamanship *you* wants to learn, not swabbing decks or emptying buckets below whilst others is aloft. Your father's son would be a good deal out of place, sir, as a cabin-boy in a common trading vessel."

Mr. Rowe's speech made an impression, and I think he saw that it did.

"Look here, Master Charles," said he, "you've a gentleman's feelings; come home now, and bear me out with your widowed mother and your only sister, sir, and with Master Fred's father, that I'm in duty bound to, and promised to deliver safe and sound as return cargo, wind and weather permitting."

"Oh, come home! come home!" reiterated Fred.

I stood speechless for a minute or two. All around and above me rose the splendid masts, trellised with the rigging that I longed to climb. The refreshing scent of tar mingled with the smells of the various cargoes. The coming and going of men who came and went to and from the ends of the earth stirred all my pulses to restlessness. And above the noises of their coming and going I heard the lapping of the water of the incoming tide against the dock, which spoke with a voice more powerful than that of Mr. Rowe.

And yet I went with him.

It was not because the canvas bag was empty, not because Fred would not stay with me (for I had begun to think that the Captain's grandson was not destined to be the hero of exploits on the ocean); but when Mr. Rowe spoke of my widowed mother and of Henrietta, he touched a sore spot on my conscience. I had had an uneasy feeling from the first that there was something rather mean in my desertion of them. Pride, and I hope some less selfish impulse, made me feel that I could never be

quite happy — even on the mainmast-top — if I knew that I had behaved ill to them.

I could not very well speak, but I turned round and began to walk in the direction of the dock-gates. Mr. Rowe behaved uncommonly kindly. He said nothing more, but turned as if I had given the word of command, and walked respectfully just behind me. I resolved not to look back, and I did not. I was quite determined, too, about one thing: Mr. Rowe should never be able to say he had seen me make a fool of myself after I had made up my mind. But in reality I had very hard work to keep from beginning to cry, just when Fred was beginning to leave off.

I screwed up my eyes and kept them dry, however. But as we went through the gate there came in a sailor with a little bundle like ours, and a ship's name on his hat. His hat sat as if a gale were just taking it off, and his sea-blue shirt was blown open by breezes that my back was turned upon. In spite of all I could do, one tear got through my eyelashes and ran down, and I caught it on my lips.

It was a very bitter tear, and as salt as the salt, salt sea!

CHAPTER XIV.

A GLOW ON THE HORIZON. — A FANTASTIC PEAL. — WHAT I SAW WHEN THE ROOF FELL IN.

It was the second day of our return voyage. Mr. Rowe had been very kind, and especially so to me. He had told us tales of seafaring life, but they related exclusively to the Royal Navy, and not unfrequently bore with disparagement on the mercantile marine.

Nowhere, perhaps, are grades of rank more strongly marked, with professional discipline and personal independence better combined, than in the army and navy. But the gulf implied by Mr. Rowe between the youngest midshipman and the highest seaman who was not an officer was, I think, in excess of the fact. As to becoming cabin-boy to a trading vessel in hopes of rising to be a captain, the bargemaster contrived to impress me with the idea that I might as well take the situation of boot and knife-

cleaner in the royal kitchen, in hopes of its proving the first step towards ascending the throne.

We seemed to have seen and done so much since we were on the canal before, that I felt quite sentimental as we glided into Linnet Flash.

"The old place looks just the same, barge-master," said I, with a travelled air.

"So it do, sir," said Mr. Rowe, and he added, "There's no place like home."

I hardly know how near we were to the town, but I know that it was getting late, that the dew was heavy on the towing-path, and that among the dark pencilled shadows of the sallows in the water the full moon's reflection lay like a golden shield, when the driver, who was ahead, stepped back and shouted, "The bells are ringing!"

When we got a little nearer we heard them quite clearly, and just when I was observing a red glow diffuse itself in the cold night sky above the willow hedge on our left, Mr. Rowe said, "There must be a queer kind of echo somewhere; I heard sixteen bells."

And then I saw the driver, whose figure

stood out dark against the moonlit moorland on our right, point with his arm to the fast crimsoning sky, and Mr. Rowe left the rudder and came forward, and Fred, who had had his head low down, listening, ran towards us from the bows and cried :

"There *are* sixteen, and they're ringing backwards, — *it's a fire !*"

The driver mounted the horse, which was put to the trot, and we hurried on. The bells came nearer and nearer with their fantastic clanging, and the sky grew more lurid as they rang. Then there was a bend in the canal, and we caught sight of the two towers of St. Philip and St. James, dark against the glow.

"The whole town is in flames !" cried Fred.

"Not it," said the bargemaster ; "it's ten to one nothing but a rubbish-heap burning, or the moors on fire beyond the town."

Mr. Rowe rather snubbed Fred, but I think he was curious about the matter. The driver urged his horse, and the good barge *Betsy* swung along at a pace to which she was little accustomed.

When we came by the cricket-field Mr. Rowe himself said, "It's in the middle of the town."

Through the deafening noise of the bells I contrived to shout in his ear a request that I might be put ashore, as we were now about on a level with my home. Mr. Rowe ran a plank quickly out and landed me, without time for adieux.

I hastened up to the town. The first street I got into was empty, but it seemed to vibrate to St. Philip's peal. And after that I pushed my way through people, hurrying as I was hurrying, and the nearer I got to home the thicker grew the crowd and the ruddier became the glow. And now, in spite of the bells, I caught other noises. The roar of irresistible fire,— which has a strange likeness to the roar of irresistible water,— the loud crackling of the burning wood, and the moving and talking of the crowd, which was so dense that I could hardly get forward.

I contrived to squeeze myself along, however, and as I turned into our street I felt the warmth of the fire, and when I looked at my old home it was a mass of flames.

I tried to get people to make way for me by saying, "It's my house; please let me through!" But nobody seemed to hear me. And yet there was a pause, which was only

filled by that curious sound when a crowd of people gasp or sigh ; and if every man had been a rock it could not have been more impossible to move backwards or forwards. It was dark, except for the moonlight, where I stood, but in a moment or two the flames burst from the bedroom windows, and the red light spread farther, and began to light up faces near me. I was just about to appeal to a man I knew, when a roar began which I knew was not that of the fire. It was the roar of human voices. And when it swelled louder, and was caught up as it came along, and then broke into deafening cheers, I was so wild with excitement and anxiety that I began to kick the legs of the man in front of me to make him let me go to the home that was burning before my eyes.

What he would have done in return, I don't know, but at this moment the crowd broke up, and we were pushed, pressed, and jostled about, and people kept calling to "Make way!" and after tumbling down, and being picked up twice, I found myself in the front row of a kind of lane that had been made through the crowd, down which several men were coming, carrying on their shoulders an armchair with people in it.

As they passed me there was a crash, which seemed to shake the street. The roof of our house had fallen in!

As it fell, the flames burst up on every side, and in the sudden glare the street became as bright as day, and every little thing about one seemed to spring into sight. Half the crowd was known to me in a moment.

Then I looked at the chair which was being carried along; and by a large chip on one of the legs I knew it was my father's old arm-chair.

And in the chair I saw Rupert in his shirt and trousers, and Henrietta in a petticoat and an outdoor jacket, with so white a face that even the firelight seemed to give it no color, and on her lap was Baby Cecil in his night-gown, with black smut marks on his nose and chin.

CHAPTER XV.

HENRIETTA'S DIARY.— A GREAT EMERGENCY.

RUPERT never was a fellow who could give descriptions of things, and Henrietta was ill for some time after the fire, and Mr. Bustard said she wasn't to talk about it.

But she knew I wanted to know, so one day when she was downstairs with me in the "Miniature Room" (it was at the Castle), she gave me a manuscript book, and said, "It's my diary, Charlie, so I know you won't look. But I've put in two marks for the beginning and end of the bit about the fire. I wrote it that evening, you know, before Mr. Bustard came, and my head got so bad."

Of course I made her show me exactly where to begin and leave off, and then I read it. This was it :

"It had been a very hot day, and I had got rather a headache and gone to bed. The pain kept me awake a

good bit, and when I did get to sleep I think I slept rather lightly. I was partly awakened by noises which seemed to have been going in my head all night till I could bear them no longer, so I woke up, and found that people were shouting outside, and that there was a dreadful smell of burning. I had got on my flannel petticoat when Rupert called me and said, 'Henny, dear, the house is on fire! Just put something round you, and come quickly.'

"Just outside the door we met Cook; she said, 'The Lord be thanked; it's you, Miss Henrietta! Come along!'

"Rupert said, 'Where's Mother, Cook?'

"'Missus was took with dreadful fainting fits,' she replied, 'and they've got her over to the *Crown*. We're all to go there, and everything that can be saved.'

"'Where's Baby,' said I, 'and Jane?'

"'With your ma, miss, I expect,' Cook said; and as we came out she asked some one, who said, 'I saw Jane at the door of the *Crown* just now.' I had been half asleep till then, but when we got into the street and saw the smoke coming out of the dining-room window, Rupert and I wanted to stay and try to save something, but one of the men who was there said, 'You and your brother's not strong enough to be of no great use, miss; you're only in the way of the engine. Everybody's doing their best to save your things, and if you'll go to the *Crown* to your mamma, you'll do the best that could be.'

"The people who were saving our things saved

them all alike, — they threw them out of the window, — and as I had seen the big blue china jar smashed to shivers, I felt a longing to go and show them what to do; but Rupert said, 'The fellow's quite right, Henny,' and he seized me by the hand and dragged me off to the *Crown*. Jane was in the hall, looking quite wild, and she said to us, 'Where's Master Cecil?' I didn't stop to ask her how it was that she didn't know. I ran out again, and Rupert came after me. I suppose we both looked up at the nursery window when we came near, and there was Baby Cecil standing and screaming for help. Before we got to the door other people had seen him, and two or three men pushed into the house. They came out gasping and puffing, without Cecil, and I heard one man say, 'It's too far gone. It wouldn't bear a child's weight, and if you got up, you'd never come down again.'

"'God help the poor child!' said the other man, who was the chemist, and had a large family, I know. I looked round and saw by Rupert's face that he had heard. It was like a stone. I don't know how it was, but it seemed to come into my head: 'If Baby Cecil is burned it will kill Rupert too.' And I began to think, and I thought of the back stairs. There was a pocket-handkerchief in my jacket pocket, and I soaked it in the water on the ground. The town burgesses wouldn't buy a new hose when we got the new steam fire-engine, and when they used the old one it burst in five places, so that everything was swimming, for the water was laid on from the canal. I think my idea must have been written on my face, for though

I didn't speak, Rupert seemed to guess at once, and he ran after me, crying, 'Let me go, Henrietta!' but I pretended not to hear.

"When we got to the back of the house the fire was not nearly so bad, and we got in. But though it wasn't exactly on fire where we were, the smoke came rolling down the passage from the front of the house, and by the time we got to the back stairs we could not see or breathe, in spite of wet cloths over our faces, and our

eyes smarted with the smoke. 'Go down on all fours, Henny,' said Rupert. So I did. It was wonderful. When I got down with my face close to the ground there was a bit of quite fresh air, and above this the smoke rolled like a cloud. I could see the castors of the legs of a table in the hall, but no higher up. In this way we saw the foot of the back stairs, and climbed up them on our hands and knees. But in spite of the bit of fresh air near the ground the smoke certainly grew thicker, and it got hotter and hotter, and we

could hear the roaring of the flames coming nearer, and the clanging of the bells outside, and I never knew what it was to feel thirst before then! When we were up the first flight, and the smoke was suffocating, I heard Rupert say, 'Oh, Henny, you good girl, shall we ever get down again?' I couldn't speak, my throat was so sore, but I remember thinking, 'It's like going up through the clouds into Heaven, and we shall find Baby Cecil there.' But after that it got rather clearer, because the fire was in the lower part of the house then, and when we got to the top we stood up, and found our way to the nursery by hearing Baby Cecil scream.

"The great difficulty was to get him down, for we couldn't carry him and keep close to the ground. So I said, 'You go first on your hands and knees backwards, and tell him to do as you do, and I'll come last, so that he may see me doing the same and imitate me.' Baby was very good about it, and when the heat worried him, and he stopped, Rupert said, 'Come on, Baby, or Henny will run over you,' and he scrambled down as good as gold.

"And when we got to the door the people began to shout and to cheer, and I thought they would have torn Baby to bits. It made me very giddy, and so did the clanging of those dreadful bells; and then I noticed that Rupert was limping, and I said, 'Oh, Rupert, have you hurt your knee?' and he said, 'It's nothing; come to the *Crown*.' But there were two of the young men from Jones's shop there, and they said, 'Don't you walk and hurt your knee, sir; we'll take you.' And they pushed up my father's armchair, which had been saved

and was outside, and Rupert sat down, I believe, because he could not stand. Then they said, 'There's room for you, miss,' and Rupert told me to come, and I took Baby on my lap; but I felt so ill I thought I should certainly fall out when they lifted us up.

"The way the people cheered made me very giddy; I think I shall always feel sick when I hear hurrahing now.

"Rupert is very good if you're ill. He looked at me and said, 'You're the bravest girl I ever knew; but dont' faint if you can help it, or Baby will fall out.'

"I didn't; and I wouldn't have fainted when we got to the *Crown* if I could have stopped myself by anything I could do."

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. ROWE ON THE SUBJECT. — OUR COUSIN. — WESTON GETS INTO PRINT. — THE HARBOR'S MOUTH. — WHAT LIES BEYOND.

MR. ROWE'S anxiety to see Rupert and Henrietta, and to "take the liberty of expressing himself" about their having saved Baby Cecil's life, was very great, but the interview did not take place for some time. The barge *Betsy* took two voyages to Nine Elms and home again before Henrietta was downstairs and allowed to talk about the fire.

Rupert refused to see the bargemaster when he called to ask after Henrietta; he was vexed because people made a fuss about the affair, and when Rupert was vexed he was not gracious. When Henrietta got better, however, she said, "We ought to see old Rowe and thank him for his kindness to Charlie;" so

the next time he called, we all went into the housekeeper's room to see him.

He was very much pleased and excited, which always seemed to make him inclined to preach. He set forth the noble motives which must have moved Rupert and Henrietta to their heroic conduct in the emergency, so that I felt more proud of them than ever. But Rupert frowned, and said, "Nonsense, Rowe, I'm sure I never thought anything of the kind; I don't believe we either of us thought anything at all."

But Mr. Rowe had not served seventeen years in the Royal Navy to be put down when he expounded a point of valor.

"That's where it is, Master Rupert," said he. "It wouldn't have been you or Miss Henrietta either if you had. 'A man overboard,' says you, — that's enough for one of your family, sir. *They* never stops to think 'Can I swim?' but in you goes, up the stairs that wouldn't hold the weight of a new-born babby, and right through the raging flames."

"Oh, dear!" cried Henrietta, "that's just what Cook and all kinds of people will say. But it was the front stairs that were on fire.

We only went up the back stairs, and they weren't burning at all."

The bargemaster smiled in reply. But it was with the affability of superior knowledge, and I feel quite sure that he always told the story (and believed it) according to this impossible version.

It was on the third day after the fire that our cousin called at the *Crown*. He had never been to see us before, and, as I have said, we had never been to the Castle. But the next day he sent a close carriage for Henrietta and my mother, and a dog-cart for Rupert and me, and brought us up to the Castle. We were there for three months.

It was through him that Rupert went to those baths abroad, which cured his knee completely. And then, because my mother could not afford to do it, he sent him to a grander public school than Doctor Jessop's old grammar school, and Mr. Johnson sent Thomas Johnson there too, for Tom could not bear to be parted from Rupert, and his father never refused him anything.

But what I think was so very kind of our cousin was his helping me. Rupert and Hen-

rietta had been a credit to the family, but I deserved nothing. I had only run away in the mean hope of outshining them, and had made a fool of myself, whilst they had been really great in doing their duty at home. However, he did back me up with Mother about going to sea, and got me on board the training-ship *Albion;* and my highest hope is to have the chance of bringing my share of renown to my father's name, that his cousin may never regret having helped me to my heart's desire.

Fred Johnson and I are very good friends, but since our barge voyage we have never been quite so intimate. I think the strongest tie between us was his splendid stories of the Captain, and I do not believe in them now.

Oddly enough, my chief friend — of the whole lot — is Weston. Rupert always said I had a vulgar taste in the choice of friends, so it seems curious that of our schoolmates Johnson should be his friend and Weston mine. For Johnson's father is only a canal-carrier, and Weston is a fellow of good family.

He is so very clever! And I have such a habit of turning my pockets inside out for everybody to see, that I admire his reticence;

and then, though he is so ironical with himself, as well as other people, he has very fine ideas and ambitions, and very noble and upright principles, — when you know him well.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," and the fire that burned down our house got Weston into print at last.

It was not a common letter either, in the "correspondence" part, with small type, and the editor not responsible. It was a leading article, printed big, and it was about the fire and Rupert and Henrietta. Thomas Johnson read it to us, and we did not know who wrote it; but it was true, and in good taste. After the account of the fire came a quotation from Horace:

"*Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis.*"

And Johnson cried, "That's Weston, depend upon it! He's in the *Weekly Spectator* at last!"

And then, to my utter amazement, came such a chronicle of the valiant deeds of Rupert's ancestors as Weston could only have got from one source. What had furnished his ready pen with matter for a comic ballad to

punish my bragging had filled it also to do honor to Rupert and Henrietta's real bravery; and down to what the colonel of my father's regiment had said of him, it was all there.

Weston came to see me the other day at Dartmouth, where our training-ship *Albion* lies, and he was so charmed by the old town, with its carved and gabled houses, and its luxuriant gardens rich with pale-blossomed laurels, which no frost dwarfs, and crimson fuchsias gnarled with age, and its hill-embosomed harbor, where the people of all grades and ages, and of both sexes, flit hither and thither in their boats as landlubbers would take an evening stroll, that I felt somewhat justified in the romantic love I have for the place.

And when we lay in one of the *Albion's* boats, rocking up and down in that soothing swell which freshens the harbor's mouth, Weston made me tell him all about the lion and the silver chain, and he called me a prig for saying so often that I did not believe in it now. I remember he said, "In this sleepy, damp, delightful Dartmouth, who but a prig could deny the truth of a poetical dream!"

He declared he could see the lion in a cave in

the rock, and that the poor beast wanted a new sea-green ribbon.

Weston speaks so much more cleverly than I can, that I could not explain to him then that I am still but too apt to dream! But the harbor's mouth is now only the beginning of my visions, which stretch far over the sea beyond, and over the darker line of that horizon where the ships come and go.

I hope it is not wrong to dream. My father was so modest as well as ambitious, so good as well as so gallant, that I would rather die than disgrace him by empty conceit and unprofitable hopes.

Weston is a very religious fellow, though he does not "cant" at all. When I was going away to Dartmouth, and he saw me off (for we were great friends), one of the last things he said to me was, "I say, don't leave off saying your prayers, you know."

I haven't, and I told him so this last time. I often pray that if ever I am great, I may be good too; and sometimes I pray that if I try hard to be good God will let me be great as well.

The most wonderful thing was old Rowe's

taking a cheap ticket and coming down to see me last summer. I never can regret my voyage with him in the *Betsy*, for I did thoroughly enjoy it; though I often think how odd it is that in my vain, jealous, wild-goose chase after adventures, I missed the chance of distinguishing myself in the only Great Emergency which has yet occurred in our family.

THE END.

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